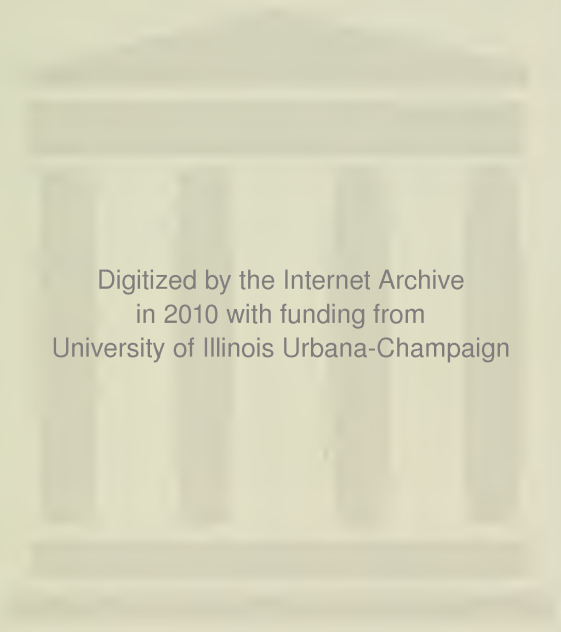




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CROSS PURPOSES.

A NOVEL.

BY

CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF "MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS," "BEATRICE,"
ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CROSS PURPOSES.

CHAPTER I.

“Now conscience wakes despair
That slumber'd——wakes the bitter memory
Of what he was, what is, and what must be.”

POLLOK.

THE sorrow of a strong-minded deep-feeling woman, never to be blazoned before strangers, is quiet and undemonstrative, but leads on to energetic action and generous self-devotion, without her sparing time for tears, lamentations, or feeble drivellings.

Susan had taken her place in an omnibus as far as it drove towards her far-distant destination near Clerkenwell, and while it proceeded at full speed she sat impatiently, suffering under that delusion so common to agitated travellers, that she could have walked much faster. It was with the sensation of a prisoner released from long confinement that she at last sprang out to proceed

forwards on foot, while every hurried step she took seemed to become heavier.

More and more desolate grew the scene as Mrs. O'Hara advanced ; but her mind, full of the one only desire to save her husband from being taken into custody, with true female heroism, scarcely dwelt an instant on the revolting details of a region where the lowest depths of human degradation, vice, crime, ignorance, and starvation were sweltering and festering within a few minutes' walk of the most wealthy and luxurious habitations in the whole world. Mud, ankle-deep, lay in one place around a clump of dingy squalid houses, the windows filled with old slates, rags, paper, tin, everything except glass. These lodgings were thickly populated by crowds of wretched-looking men and women sneaking silently about, as if both afraid and ashamed to look mankind or each other in the face.

The entrance by Frying-pan Alley led through a lane exactly three feet wide and thirty feet long, being so narrow that a full-sized coffin would have had to be turned upright on its edge in order to get in ; but through this almost impassable gorge Susan found she must wedge her weary way, that she might reach the room supposed to be tenanted by her unhappy husband.

Mrs. O'Hara dragged herself up a dark, steep, wooden stair, the roof and rafters of which were

so besmeared with smoke and festooned with cobwebs, that they seemed as if covered with black cloth, which hung in shreds and banners on every side. The first door at which Susan ventured cautiously to lift the latch, she hastily closed again on discovering a room lighted with flaring gas, and the floor which was divided by planks about a foot high into compartments the size of a man's body, seemed one mass of human beings. In each of these divisions a lodger lay covered and packed into this living grave, with a coarse rug over him, while the curses and imprecations uttered from time to time, not loud but very deep, were appalling.

That room, or rather that sty, was commonly named "Ruffian's Hall;" and Susan, her heart yet beating tumultuously with the shock of beholding such a scene, hastily dragged herself upwards to the very garret. Here at length were the two rooms described by Mr. Mortimer. In the first sat a very aged woman looking like a bundle of rags, reclining on the edge of a curtainless bed, and crouching over an empty grate. The ruinous remains of a tattered cloak hung from the cracked and blackened roof, and on the shelf lay a tattered bonnet, a little stucco image of Saint Bridget, and a bottle of "holy water."

The old crone was carefully sorting bones, morsels of stale meat, refuse of crusts, scraps of

iron, rusty keys and cinders, while her own musty dress and dull haggard look were in desolate keeping with the loathsome misery around. It seemed as if there were no climax to the wretchedness which Susan was doomed that night to behold; but when she entered the room opposite it was totally empty. Every pane of glass in the window-sash was broken, while the moon shone with a glorious effulgence on the mouldy walls and rotten floor, thus contrasting the pure beauty of nature with the squalid misery of this human den.

The wind howled mournfully through that vacant window as if in sympathy with the one mournful occupant, and as the bright moon-beams fell on Susan, her face might have been mistaken for that of a statue, except that the large glaring eyes looked instinct with agonized anxiety, giving an aspect of almost stern resolution to her usually gentle features.

Susan having comprehended the whole squalid scene in a glance, now stood mournfully contemplating O'Hara's wretched home. Her strong heart sunk before the horrors of such a dwelling, dreary as death itself, and quite as silent. While yet in a state of nervous perturbation, rooted at the threshold, Mrs. O'Hara heard the tramp of heavy footsteps cautiously ascending that wooden stair-case, and scarcely had she time to retire behind an open door, before the posse of police

arrived who were intended to way-lay and seize her husband. The leading man, after reaching a landing place, lifted his lantern aloft, and opening the bull's eye threw a strong glare all around, evidently anxious to ascertain whether O'Hara had yet returned. In the bright flash of light which darted forth, Susan at this moment discovered the cold stern countenance, pale with malignant excitement, of O'Grady.

She felt as if her husband, had they met now, would at this moment have strangled him, and she trembled to think how two men thus hunting each other to death, might one day meet. O'Grady stole into the very room in which Susan stood, and he pushed back the door till she became almost crushed behind it; but still, though she breathed spasmodically from extreme terror, she neither moved nor spoke, and O'Grady, after giving one keen searching glance around, slowly withdrew the two policemen into the opposite room. There the party were placed to watch so vigilantly for their expected victim that Susan felt as if there were no possibility of her husband's escape, unless she could steal down to intercept him, yet the smallest movement on her own part would inevitably attract the practised eye of the observant constables.

Not a sound was heard, and even her own shadow on the wall startled Susan, making her

heart flutter with alarm. The buzzing of a fly might now have become audible, so intensely did the party of police listen for O'Hara's approach, while O'Grady stood ready to spring out like a tiger and seize him.

At that moment, while time plodded wearily on, poor Susan's memory took a long sweep backwards into past years, in hours and days, before her life had become one dark and flowerless twilight. She thought of her husband as she first had known him—the great man of a great house, respected, honoured, admired; and as page after page of Susan's past existence became visible to her recollection, all seemed now like the wild echo of long-vanished happiness. How much she had once thought of O'Hara's slightest notice! how proud she once was of his attachment—how dazzled by the felicity of becoming his wife! Now not a gleam of hope remained of his being ever restored from the grasp of his one besetting and besotting vice. How sad are the tears that a woman sheds alone for her husband!

“One evil habit has brought Patrick down to this wretched plight,” thought Susan; “and worse yet awaits him, unless this effort be successful. My heart melts with pity to think how treacherously he has been undermined, and that even now my own husband is in danger of a public execution through the malice of that enemy who is per-

severingly ensnaring him to death and final destruction. O'Grady has his own cruel purposes to serve, but I am resolved that he shall be discomfited, and I feel a consciousness of success."

A noise was heard below—a reeling, uncertain step—a low muttering voice—and now O'Grady, with his myrmidons, stood up ready for action!

If a disembodied spirit had moved along the floor, it could scarcely have glided more noiselessly across the gloomy apartment than that grey, dark figure! Susan passed the opposite door with the swiftness of an arrow, and fled down stairs. Meeting her husband in the narrow, dark passage, she then grasped his arm, and whispered in his astonished ear, saying with hurried earnestness,—

"Patrick, as you value life and liberty come silently with me. O'Grady and the police are on your track in that house."

In an instant O'Hara became sobered, and with the docility of a child accompanied his wife to a small room—"a decent-looking hole"—which she had already bespoken for the night. It was very small, but clean and tidy, a fire burning cheerily in the grate, and a tea-kettle singing merrily on the hob. Here Susan attempted to look happy. She succeeded at any rate in being kind and consoling, though from her gentle coun-

tenance every warm tinge of glowing life had vanished.

Mrs. O'Hara seated her almost bewildered husband, half drunk with gin, and wholly stupefied with cold and with alarm, on a chair, took off some of his wet clothing, brought him hot water to wash, and poured him out some tea. Not one look or word could have betrayed that Susan was not attending on the best of husbands as well as the most deservedly welcome; till at length the generous assiduity of his true-hearted wife touched to its inmost core the seared and withered heart of O'Hara.

"Susan!" he exclaimed, in an accent of tenderness that reminded her of former happy days, "are you never to desert me?"

"Never, while we both live?" replied she, a sad smile quivering on her lip. "Patrick, let us now again have one happy evening together."

"Happy!" exclaimed O'Hara, in accents of profound melancholy, "I have forgotten the meaning of that word! My whole past life seems one great continent of misery! Happy! did you say, Susan? That is all a dream. Do you not know that every passer-by points the hand of scorn at your drunken husband? There was a time! Yes, Susan,—once, long ago,—I remember you with a husband both respected and loved; who never thought to point the lean finger of agony at his

own wife; saying, but too truly, ‘I have broken your heart!’ Yes, my own Susan, do not attempt to conceal that. I see misery stamped on every feature! I see white hairs prematurely on your head! I see your figure bent to the earth with sorrow, not with years. I see death in the shadow of your countenance, and I know it all to be my fault—mine only!”

“Do not say so, Patrick. Do not think so. I am cheered by the hope that old times are coming back for us—that in this hour of trouble we shall, side by side, read the sacred volume for comfort together, and need we look beyond it? Now that my own dear husband has learned the tough lesson of experience, not easily to be forgotten, he will—”

“Join the Temperance Society!” exclaimed O’Hara, with a ghastly laugh of melancholy derision. He plunged the poker into Susan’s frugal little fire, and almost annihilated it; then, starting up, walked feverishly up and down the room, saying, with a glance of commiseration at his anxious wife, “You expect, my poor, foolish, clever Susan, to see me, Patrick O’Hara, the drunkard, wearing a teetotal medal, carrying my pocket-handkerchief on a walking-stick as a flag of victory, and marching with the cold-water army to conquer or perish! I am to read only temperance tracts, take in a temperance newspaper, frequent

temperance coffee-houses, and use only temperance handkerchiefs! Poor, poor Susan! What an inexhaustible fund of hopeful affection yours has been! Oh that your husband could be more worthy of it; but I cannot trust myself! I am haunted by the ghosts of a thousand good resolutions. You have struggled for me, Susan, as only a wife can struggle. May God reward you; but I cannot. Long and unchangeably you have been to me sure as death, and surer still! You are the best and truest friend ever man was blest with."

"Think what a home we once had, Patrick, and might have again," said Susan, anxiously. "It seems to my memory as if Lough Elan had been a remains of Paradise that lingered on the earth for me. Let us fight the battle of life now as God and nature direct. Let us struggle bravely together through this Slough of Despond; and when we die, let us be found waiting in sober, solemn earnest, at our post. If I suffer cold, starvation, and solitude, such trials are what every nun in a convent condemns herself to endure, without the cheering hope that I have of bringing my wandering husband back to peace. Let me, then, be your right hand and your left—your all, Patrick, to work and think for you, till it is well with us again. I shall take no time to pet my griefs or to magnify them, but think only of our

coming deliverance. You will choose the straight road, Patrick. No one was ever yet lost who kept to that; and let us live on from day to day, from hour to hour, on the narrow, but safe and pleasant path of duty."

"Live for to-day, to-morrow's light
Will bring to-morrow's cares to light."

CHAPTER II.

“Come not nigh :
Go carry to some other place
The hardness of thy coward eye—
The falsehood of thy sallow face.”

WORDSWORTH.

“WELL, Clifford!” exclaimed Lord Brentford, as his travelling chariot dashed along the venerable approach to Torchester, overhung by old patriarchal cedars; “welcome to the old abbey! I wonder that the roof of my gallant ancestors did not fall and crush that fellow Brownlow, when he first entered their time-worn halls as its master. No matter how many generations of my chivalrous predecessors grew up, and grew old, beneath the shadow of these noble trees, I come here a stranger!”

“I do think the *parvenu* family into whose clutches this unfortunate old place has fallen might have been satisfied with some villa at Highgate, all stucco and trellises, in the pastry-cook style,” observed Captain Clifford, as he looked admiringly at the antique towers and trees. “Half

an acre of daffodils should have sufficed for their pleasure-grounds, surrounded by damp gravel walks, trashy borders, and a little white tent flaring on the lawn."

"Mr. Alderman Shopkeeper, we all know, has a daughter Anne, very silly and rather pretty. There is also, I was yesterday informed by O'Grady, a niece, who inherits the property," said Lord Tipperary, significantly. "Might you not find ways and means, Brentford, to become pleasantly reinstated in your patrimonial acres?"

"Never! No; I am not to be bought or sold by some deformed, little red-haired heiress. But, certainly, now, for the first time, I begin to wish that my long-descended ancestors had been a little less extravagant, and a trifle more economical, in ages past. Like the beautiful Peri in Moore's poem, it may be said hereafter of me, on my arrival here that I—

"Wept to think my recreant race
Should e'er have lost this glorious place."

"Then, if you positively decline the newly-discovered heiress, I shall start for the Torchester cup!" exclaimed Lord Tipperary, with animation.

"I never yet could see the face
That had no charm for me,
From fifteen years to fifty's pace
They all victorious be!"

“ But I must have your solemn promise not to attempt being my rival, Brentford, as you are always the favourite.”

“ Depend upon my avoiding the whole family. There, now, beneath that old arch, stands Mr. Attorney Brownlow, the heiress’ guardian, tall, stout, red-faced, and, in short, quite of City dimensions. Look at his full-blown waistcoat! How I hate that party!” said Lord Brentford, with a bitter laugh. “ The man has such a butler-out-of-place look! He is like a silk-mercier coming forward to receive his customers!—or the landlord of a small public-house, cringing and smiling his welcome to the Torchester Arms.”

“ Ah, Brownlow!” exclaimed Lord Tipperary, now that they were within hearing, “ How are you, old fellow? Pray give us a cheering welcome to this poor, dear, dull, melancholy old house, for we are becoming quite hypped with looking at its dismal windows. You must have a perfect crowd of ghosts here.”

This easy, familiar greeting from a real “ live Lord,” pleased Daniel prodigiously, who came forward with an ostentatiously cordial reception, fussy, over-done and bustling. When on ceremony, Mr. Brownlow always seemed as if he had never acquired the faculty of sitting still. His restlessness appeared incessant; for the happy, self-important host was here, there, and every-

where in two minutes. During the first half hour, Captain Clifford counted nine different seats that Mr. Brownlow had occupied, and he whispered to Lord Brentford that St. Vitus' dance was nothing to this.

The three young men thought in their very private minds that Mr. Brownlow's was the most vulgar style of vulgarity they had ever seen, and they at once detected in the expression of his countenance something very false,—as false as the jewellery he wore. Nothing that Daniel ever said rung true; nothing that he looked seemed sincere; nothing that he did was straightforward; and all this he had not even the tact to conceal. His manner had, in fact, too much manner in it, and nature had set the seal of intense cunning on Mr. Brownlow's whole aspect, while in general he entered the room with a defying air, as if conscious that he took society by storm, and was in hourly danger of being "cut."

"How I should like to kick him down stairs!" whispered Lord Brentford to Captain Clifford, as he ascended for the first time towards his old patrimonial home. "Do you think he would feel hurt if I told him so?"

The ladies being absent when Lord Brentford & Co. arrived, the young men were taken out immediately by Mr. Brownlow to be tormented and lionized over the grounds. Daniel at Tor-

chester Abbey affected a great deal of country-gentlemanism while showing off the grounds, equipped in a studiously hideous costume. Grasping a hoe, therefore, and throwing on a wide-awake, he led the party of newly arrived guests through the usual damp glen, over the invariable cold hill-top, ankle-deep through the farm-yard, to the kennel, the poultry-yard, the red-hot grape-house and the still hotter stable. Nothing delighted Daniel more than proudly to expand his capacious waistcoat, and call himself "a good old country gentleman, all of the olden time!" It was a song he sung often at public meetings in a stately, stilted, overdone manner, extremely ludicrous to hear, and always with a very obvious application to himself.

Theresa had not witnessed the arrival of Lord Brentford, but her heart beat tumultuously with a thousand mingled sensations of self-reproach and apprehension, as she took her place in the library with Anne, to receive the gentlemen on their return. The two young ladies sat in the deep embrasure of a window, large enough to swallow up any modern boudoir, and there Theresa tried earnestly to compose herself in the prospect of again seeing the not very unwelcome nor very disagreeable Lord Brentford.

Theresa, in the morning, had told that cleverest of all diplomatists, Mrs. Brownlow, the whole

history of Lord Brentford's accidental visit to Pine-forest Isle on Lough Elan, and entreated permission to retire for ever from Torchester, as the part she had to act there was to her feelings misery beyond endurance; but Mrs. Brownlow insisted vehemently, almost frantically, on the fulfilment of her promise, undertaking to make it very easy, as well as very quickly over. No sooner did Mrs. Brownlow learn that Theresa had been known to Lord Brentford only as a ward of the late Lord Tipperary's steward in Ireland, than she took the whole affair confidently in her own hands, saying, carelessly, to the newly arrived strangers, after the first stately ceremony with which she received them was over, that they would meet a niece of Mr. Brownlow's in the house, who had recently returned from a short residence in Ireland.

Anne Brownlow, meanwhile, whose flimsy mind, like a sieve, could hold nothing long, had been wandering about the house in search of some one on whom she could fasten her society, and in whose ear she could pour out the whole tide of her thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears respecting the expected visitors. Her visions of the past and future formed a gay kaleidoscope of London balls, polkas, victims, proposals, orange-flowers, coronets, favours, and four horses. Nothing out of the peerage could satisfy her ambition, and she greatly

preferred five balls in a coronet to four. As for any poor Tony Lumpkin of a country squire, that was not to be dreamed of! Anne even indulged romantic dreams of Lord Tipperary shooting Lord Brentford on her account; and, after narrowly escaping with his life, enacting several scenes of love and despair, ending in St. George's, Hanover Square, and a special licence.

Talking was, to Anne Brownlow, not a mere recreation, but an absolute necessity, though her conversation seemed to Theresa all legs and arms, without body or connexion. Her favourite subjects of discussion were the customs, habits, and manners of gentlemen; their faults, their virtues, their manner of life, their merits, their demerits, their dress, features, aspect, and general eligibility in the matrimonial world; but especially as to the possibility or impossibility of her accepting them herself. It seemed as if she meant to dispose of her hand, as at an auction, to the highest bidder, she measured people so exactly by their position. That day she had sat down beside Theresa in a full burst of nonsense, and said, in the course of a long, one-sided conversation—

“Let me make you my confessor! I, Anne Brownlow, am in truth the most unromantic person breathing! There is something in that respect quite un-young-lady-ish about me, as I have an utter contempt for poverty. I detest all trouble.

I enjoy being of importance. I delight in flattery. I doat on being admired. I consider beauty, well-managed, as the way to all promotion, and I shall marry for a high position in London, and an opera-box. I know you will think me unfeeling, and so I am. I never pretend to be better than nature and circumstances made me."

"But," said Theresa, "you seem to think all existence bound up in London."

"So it is for me! any other destiny would be a scene of disappointment, for it is my world. I must have the wealth and honours of life, the more the better."

"Yet," answered Theresa, reflectively, "nothing wears out the heart like a succession of insignificant and contemptible interests which are born only of and for this world, but not sanctifying the deeper and dearer ties of life. I should not care so much as a sour grape for mere rank or mere wealth. Vanity is not so lasting or so pleasant a stimulus in life as affection."

"Give me both united! I like to be one of the fast young ladies,—in short, the very essence of fastness; and, at the same time to be, as it must be confessed I am, a favourite with everybody," said Anne; who habitually boasted of the most ordinary attentions from her acquaintances, actually proud of those common civilities that it would have been rudeness in any one to omit.

“ When I called yesterday on dear Kitty Neville —(I mean, you know, Lady Katherine)—she was so civil! The moment I entered she rose, and held out her hand, saying, ‘ How do you do?’ Her groom of the chambers, who is always so attentive to me, placed my chair; and Charlie—(meaning Lord Charles Neville!)—nodded to me in a most agreeable way from the writing-table; but we are so intimate, he did not think it necessary to rise, or even to say a word; and that dear old dot, the Dowager Duchess,—‘ Mammy,’ as we call her,—just hurried, in her good-humoured, unceremonious way out of the room, as I entered, saying, ‘ Excuse me for one moment.’ She did not return, dear old soul; so Kate had to follow, and left me sitting alone there, in the most quite-at-home state imaginable. Some people think Kitty Neville excessively haughty and disagreeable, but, as far as I see, she is not—at least not to me! When I entered yesterday, she was in the act of saying, ‘ Not at home!’ but the instant I appeared, she added, in her languid, odd way, ‘ Well! as you have got in, I suppose you must stay!’ That was so like Kate Neville, droll, whimsical creature as she is! Full of dry humour—though very dry indeed, sometimes,—rather brusque occasionally, no doubt; but I do not mind that. For instance, after she left school, I inquired if we were still to call her, as in former

days, 'Kitty?' and she answered, with such an air as might have intimidated any one who knew her less than I do, 'Call me what you please, Miss Brownlow!' Many people would have taken that as a rebuff, but I merely laughed at her droll, whimsical ways; and 'Kitty' she shall remain to the end of the chapter!"

Anne Brownlow's thoughts were always a perfect *ignis fatuus*, so that her conversation scarcely knew how to overtake them, and darted about from pole to pole, from Belgravia to Siberia, or from Aberdeen to Florence, and she fled the next moment, in her usual hocus-pocus way, to a totally different subject, saying, "Now you have stared long enough at this dull, uninhabited landscape. I admire no views but those in Kensington Gardens or the Regent's Park. These green trees and waving fields are for poets, painters, and romantic lovers; but even those who talk most about the delights of country life take care, if possible, to secure a house in Piccadilly or Carlton Terrace. Nothing makes people tired of each other so frightfully as living together in the country; and I am resolved, before marrying any man on earth, that we shall pass three wet days at some dull country house together. For that reason I am glad Lord Brentford is come this morning to see how he stands the test."

“Is he one of your admirers?” asked Theresa, endeavouring to assume an indifferent look.

“Of course! When we are together his every word and look is, in fact, a proposal,” answered Anne, confidentially. “He talks very little, to be sure, and tries to look very indifferent. Sometimes he certainly succeeds in making one feel as if he did not care, but then how he listens! Rather satirically, it must be allowed; yet, when I stop, he says so funnily, as if I were a dancing-dog, or some creature obliged to amuse him, ‘Go on!’ I remind Lord Brentford, he says, of some very beautiful fairy, or supernatural being, he once saw in Ireland, but who disappeared from the face of the earth like a myth, almost immediately. How he does rave about that girl! I am quite jealous of her memory, sometimes.”

Theresa turned away, her face flooded with scarlet, while Anne continued in her usual tone of earnest nonsense, adding, “I am told, Mrs. Cousin, that you and I have some small resemblance. How flattered you must be! It is very odd, that lately Papa has had so many till now unheard-of relations showering in at our doors and windows! A perfect hailstorm! Only think of this! I never in my life was told of uncle Richard’s existence, nor of yours. I wonder whether any more aunts, uncles, or grandfathers will arrive soon!”

Theresa smiled, but she coloured deeply while

Anne proceeded, in an apologetic tone, saying, "The fact is, that from my babyhood I have been kept in a perpetual whirl of lessons, with no time left to think. Music, three hours a-day; languages, ditto; drawing, ditto; dancing and calisthenics, ditto; not a minute was left in which to ask myself who I was, or who my relatives are. I supposed that, being in the world, I must have had grandfathers and grandmothers, but who they all were, or where they came from, was in none of my grammars and dictionaries. As for Uncle Richard, I knew more about Julius Cæsar; though not very much about him, good worthy man, as Mamma got me off the history and composition class, that I might have another hour in which to practise my scales."

Theresa broke into an irresistible smile at the idea of what Anne Brownlow's compositions would have been; but seeing an answer expected, she said, in a tone of good-humoured merriment,—“There should be a class in every school, to teach people their own pedigree; besides the usual question, ‘Who are your godfathers and godmothers?’ let an examination be added, whether you know who are your nearest relations. Girls at school, educated an hundred miles from home, with companions who neither know nor care about each other's connexions, might really lose an aunt or grandmother with

out becoming aware that it is a case for crape and bombazine!"

"Oh! as for mourning, that is going out very fast," replied Anne, looking reflective; "white muslin with broad hems is deep enough now for anybody; but to some few people black is becoming, and then they should keep a relay of old uncles and aunts to die off whenever they wish to look particularly well. Gentlemen, even on the loss of their wives, have very lenient ideas now about widower's weeds. They appear, after the first week, in a coloured great-coat, checked border-plaid waistcoat, grey gloves, and a dark-blue neckcloth. There are very few men whose complexions stand wearing a white waistcoat and tie," added Anne, with an air of deep reflection; "they either look like boiled chickens in a white sauce, or as dark and dingy as half-cast Creoles."

"That is a very serious consideration!" answered Theresa, gravely; "people should have more compassion for themselves than to appear so disfigured."

"I am always ready to die over the old-fashioned orders for Court mourning. Who ever can imagine such perfectly unheard-of-in-the-modern-world articles as 'chamois-leather shoes and gloves!' But in those old, antediluvian times, when 'plain linen and bands' were invented,

people really did, whenever they buried a relative, make themselves hideous. I should have hated then to be a widow, but now we may wear curls and rings. The costume is not unbecoming, if Lord Brentford should take it into his head, after making me a countess, to make me a dowager! I cannot afford, however, to lose a single man who has remained at home now, for one-half of my admirers are at the Black Sea and the other in the Baltic. I never can distinguish one of those places from the other, both being spelled with a B, and somehow the same Admiral Dundas seems to command all our fleets! He should take that horrid Czar prisoner and storm St. Petersburg at once. I hate people to be slow and hanging on their oars."

"Do I hear you aright? Who can say a word or think a thought but in admiration of our soldiers and sailors, when every man is a hero. Never did the defenders of Great Britain rally round her standard with more chivalrous, death-seeking bravery, than now! I am proud of every individual in our army and navy. Even a little drummer-boy going with his regiment I look at with grateful respect!" exclaimed Theresa, her bright eyes brightening and sparkling like diamonds in the sun. "The lion of England has raised his head in the hour of danger, and every hair in his mane seems bristling in defence of liberty and civiliza-

tion. Glory is the prize, and for that each British soldier bids with his life."

"I cannot but wonder at gentlemen of rank and fortune leaving their comfortable firesides, to kill or be killed in that desperate way," said Anne, with a vacant yawn. "It is all very well for drummer-boys or privates, who have nothing to lose beside their own insignificant lives; but fancy the Duke of Cambridge forsaking London in the very height of the season, or even Lord Tipperary leaving his opera-box and the Carlton for a tumble-down tent at Scutari, and perhaps a shot through his body!"

"Yes! yet, who ever spilled their blood and laid down their lives with more lavish, unsparing patriotism, than the noblest aristocracy of England do now? born in splendour, brought up in luxury, and dying on the field of fame, with the triumphant, unflinching heroism of martyrs. There is no courage on earth equal to the calm, deliberate heroism of an Englishman, yielding up life or limb cheerfully in battle, without one personal regret, and scarcely thinking he does enough for his country, when he dies for it. England may well be proud of her gallant sons, and weep tears of blood for each hero who has fallen in defence of her flag."

"With his back to the turf, and his feet to the foe,
And leaving in battle no blot on his name,
Looks proudly to heaven from the death-bed of fame."

CAMPBELL.

“ Even ladies, in these stirring times, go where glory waits them,” added Anne, becoming enthusiastic. “ How I should have liked to visit Byron’s beautiful scenes, ‘ the blue waters of the Mediterranean,’ and so forth, with Miss Nightingale, and to attend the poor, dear soldiers; only I should have much preferred attending to the wounded officers. I am told the ladies’ dress is shockingly unbecoming—really no better than a prison-dress! Captain Clifford tells me, moreover, that before entering on hospital duty, all the nurses—but I can hardly believe that—must have their hair cut off.”

“ And you could not, like the ladies of Carthage, sacrifice your beautiful ringlets? I often wonder,” said Theresa, “ what possible reward can be invented, worthy of England, to offer Miss Nightingale as a memorial of her marvellous and really useful heroism.”

“ Suppose, now, when a queen reigns over us, an order of merit were instituted for ladies,” exclaimed Anne, eagerly; “ let it be called the Order of the Nightingale, and only bestowed on the twelve most patriotic women in Great Britain.”

“ That would not suit the modest privacy of our English ladies’ feelings,” replied Theresa, reflectively. “ Though Miss Nightingale’s actions must be talked of hereafter in poetry and prose,

round every hearthstone in Britain, and will be mentioned in history for centuries to come, yet I am confident she would not herself desire to wear any public emblazonry of her own deeds."

"Your ideas are fit only for the humdrum women of past ages, such as those pictures represent here hanging on the wall, in hoops and petticoats, who were unable to seek any distinction by exerting themselves, either in mind or body; but—*Nous avons changé tout cela*," said Anne, leveling her glass at the pictures hanging around; "how those old men in buckram and armour, on the wall, must wonder at our goings-on now! I hate to think that we have the misfortune to be descended from that red-faced old alderman; but they seem all to have been a strange set of ridiculous-looking quizzes!"

"On the contrary, each was in his time a great and useful man! I was reading this very day the pedigree of that Brentford family; and all were heroes, generals, judges, bishops, orators, or statesmen," answered Theresa, glowing with animation. "The long scroll of their histories carried me back to the age of romance and chivalry, even to the time when Queen Eleanor—who must have been one of the Nightingale family—sucked the poison out of her husband's wounds. When sitting here to-day, I tried to fancy those ancestral-looking people as they were when living

and acting in this very room. At last it almost appeared to my fancy as if once I had seen all those faces before, in some far-off, shadowy dream. Several of their countenances appeared very familiar to my memory, and all the morning since I have been in that vague, dreamy state occasionally experienced by imaginative persons, as if everything we see or do, had been seen or done before. It is very strange!"

"Very!" answered Anne absently, "Will you pull my collar straight? Thanks."

"Once these very walls echoed to the sound of voices, witnessed sorrows, and rung with laughter from the living originals of those numerous portraits!" continued Theresa, looking earnestly upwards. "The Brentford family seem to have been a gifted race, all great or good, or both."

"Their representative now, is a very nice creature," observed Anne, becoming more at home on a modern subject. "He is a perfect duck, and waltzes inimitably!"

"As England now requires every man to do his duty and even more, I think the difference in times like these between what Lord Brentford is now as a mere waltzing man, from what he might be, serving his country in the cabinet or in the field, is as great a contrast as between the Koh-i-noor diamond and the pebble at our feet. In an emergency like this, when all the chivalry of England

has gone forth to defend the rights of freedom, if there be anything on earth I could despise and hate, it would be a mere dancing man," said Theresa, glowing with ardour. "Fancy a gifted young Englishman like Lord Brentford, not seeing that he has a mission in life to perform as the benefactor of his tenantry at home, as a legislator in Parliament, or as the protector of his country. There are debates every night now on which his position and his very life may depend, yet, instead of listening to these, he is waltzing with you, or lounging with a cigar in his mouth at the billiard table."

"What can the poor man do? It is impossible for Lord Brentford to make his duties in Parliament consistent with his attendance at the Opera! That delicious thing 'Les Huguenots,' was performed for the first time on the very night of a dry dull debate about the Popish question; and you know Lord Brentford cannot be in two places at once!"

"He ought to be in three," answered Theresa smiling. "Let him make a fine patriotic speech in the House of Lords, buy a commission in the army, and benefit his tenantry in Shropshire. Then I shall say he deserves to be Lord Brentford, and to enjoy all the great benefits he derives from the institutions and government of his country."

"How much better to be the idol of half-a-

hundred ladies at home, and the model of half-a-hundred juvenile men at Almack's!" observed Anne yawning. "Your ideas about being useful and all that sort of thing, are fit only for the teacher of a Sunday-school! As for Lord Brentford running his head up to a cannon's mouth, I dare say he has a vulgar prejudice in favour of long life, and agrees with me and Falstaff in thinking it better to be a living jackass than a dead lion."

"You are pleased to be complimentary," said Theresa laughing. "Lord Brentford would feel greatly flattered. I never shall think a monkey as good as a man, however, and all men who are men should individually do their little best to find some service that they can render their country in the field or in the cabinet. When we think of anything useful or good, where is Lord Brentford?"

"Where?" said Anne looking vacantly round. "I wish Papa did not detain him so long at the stable and garden! Say what you will, an idle man in the drawing-room of a country house has his merits, and cannot be dispensed with."

"My old school-mistress at Dublin used to assert that she could know any person in an hour, or in ten years; but that no intermediate impressions need be relied on," said Theresa. "I once met Lord Brentford in Ireland, and sitting beside

you here reminds me so of former days at Elan Castle, with Lady Dora, that I could almost forget for to-day the changed times that have fallen on me since. During the short day and hour of our acquaintance, for it was very little more, Lord Brentford seemed to me——”

What the young peer had seemed to the young lady can never now be known, for Theresa stopped, and the colour rushed in torrents over her face and neck as her eyes met those of Lord Brentford himself. He was standing beside Theresa, as if his feet were rooted to the spot, and a pair of astonished eyes fixed upon her with delighted surprise on again so unexpectedly beholding the long-lost object of his admiration. It seemed as if he with difficulty controlled a perfect frenzy of joy, while scarcely daring to believe the evidence of his own senses, that Theresa was actually found, and looking, if possible, more beautiful than memory had painted her. He shaded his eyes with one hand as if dazzled by the brilliancy of her smile, and exclaimed in almost breathless accents, “Can this be you? impossible!”

“Not quite impossible!” replied Theresa in a low agitated voice; “I certainly am myself and nobody else, that is an undeniable fact.”

“Then this happy hour shall stand for ever in my memory apart and distinct from all others—a light with no shadow! Since we parted in Ireland

I have been miserably anxious to discover you again.”—

“My life has been a task of love;
One long, long thought of you.”

“Pray;” said Theresa, laughing elfishly, and colouring very deeply at the excited tone and manner of Lord Brentford; “Have you joined a set of strolling players of late, as you seem rehearsing a part now for the stage?”

“The truth is, I am out of my wits with joy! If you wish to do me a favour, speak of nothing and of nobody but yourself for a week to come, that I may hear an account of all that has kept you out of sight these two long weary months! You are at last, however, restored!”

“And so are you!” interposed Theresa with a blushing smile of most fascinating naiveté, “I am very glad indeed to see you again.”

“Quite right!” replied Lord Brentford with animation; “you ought to be and you must be. Once more the fairy of Pine-forest-Isle has furled her wings and condescended to become visible before mortal eyes! How I have longed for this hour! Now pray let us both be glad to see each other again, but you seem a mere iceberg of indifference! Do say something civil; as for my own part, I feel an almost painful pang of ecstasy in finding you here. If it had been the ghost of my grandfather I should not have been half so much

surprised! How I pity those who cannot be astonished, the sensation to-day is so pleasant."

Lord Brentford extended his hand to Theresa, with a look of graceful and very cordial interest; while Anne, seeing the evident admiration of no ordinary degree betrayed in his look and manner, became indignantly affronted. All her expectations of the Brentford coronet instantly vanished like a dissolving view, and she immediately, though still with some unwillingness, promoted Lord Tipperary to be her favourite among the trio of guests, "*vice* Lord Brentford cashiered." If his emotion on this unexpected meeting was too obvious to be concealed or misinterpreted, even by the dense faculties of Anne Brownlow, how much more unmistakeable was it to the blushing Theresa, on whose downcast face the brightest rose-tint appeared. A slanting sunbeam shone over the dark masses of her jet black hair, which was gathered into a large plait behind, showing to advantage the peculiarly classical form of her head and throat, but in her eyes there appeared an expression of increasing embarrassment and of real distress, for many a remembrance came floating through her memory of her past and present position; while Lord Brentford, who had evidently heard some small share of what had passed between herself and Anne, rattled on, saying,—

"Some envious being, in revenge for my having

excelled all the rest of mankind, has misrepresented me to you! I am almost ashamed of my own name during the last two minutes, when I have heard myself discussed, as the indolent, idle, smoking, not greatly-to-be-respected representative of many much better ancestors! Pray suspend your opinion and remodel it,—

“Be his faults and his follies forgot by thee, then;
Or, if from their slumber the veil be removed,
Weep o’er them in silence, and close it again.”

“I am so taken by surprise!” said Theresa, colouring deeply.

“We are all taken by surprise! You are surprised, I am surprised, Miss Brownlow is surprised! The very dog is surprised. The meeting of old friends is invariably embarrassed and silent. Who ever dreamed of finding an Irish fairy sitting at her crochet-work in Middlesex! After searching for you till all hope was over, to find the diamond of all Ireland here in my very pocket.”

“Not quite that!” interposed Anne, laughing. “Your’s is a strong figure of speech, but very original, and must be put in your next sonnet; I believe you write verses, Lord Brentford, on a new patent elastic plan, to fit any lady, young, old, or middle-aged. I once greatly admired some poetry you addressed to that elderly young lady Miss Arden.”

“Well! every sonnet I pen in future shall be a farewell for ever to all womankind, present company excepted.”

“Of course, till the verses are wanted for another,” answered Anne, archly. “Your lines to Lady Janet on her shooting two red-deer with right and left shots were most touching. You are a Landseer in poetry!”

“Lady Janet is a very fast young lady—very fast indeed!”

“And a very fast friend of yours,” added Anne slyly. “There is, whenever you meet, a perfect battledore and shuttlecock of witty repartee.”

“No! I am not tuned up to her pitch! Lady Janet is one of those personages who affect to have painfully gay spirits, and feel quite disgraced if there be a moment in their society without agonies of laughter. I have not bodily strength to laugh as much as she expects. I grow in her society graver and graver every minute. Everything is ‘so jolly,’ or ‘so delightfully brisk,’ or ‘too perfect!’ I am tired of that style. I would rather be interested than amused. Give me something more feminine at any rate than Lady Janet, a little sentiment and a little grain of romance; but I need not trouble my head about what I should like, for the person best worth having will not perhaps have me,—

“The bee through many a garden roves,
And hums his lay of courtship o’er;
But when he finds the flower he loves,
He settles there, and hums no more.”

Lord Brentford looked earnestly at Theresa, and then extending his hand with a smile, added “May I trouble you for that hyacinth?”

“No!” replied Theresa, smilingly withholding it, “the hyacinth is not a lucky flower.”

“I shall make it lucky. I shall wear it with so much pride and pleasure that all mankind must learn to long for a hyacinth,” answered Lord Brentford, wishing the beautiful blush that rose on Theresa’s cheek could have been fixed there for ever, and it was followed by a smile still more enchanting. “I mean to reject all the weeds of life, and snatch all the flowers,—

“I’ll give—but not the full-blown rose,
Nor rosebud, more in fashion;
Such short-lived offerings but disclose
A transitory passion.”

“This is one of the white days in my existence, and succeeding years can certainly bring me few like it!”

“Pray how did you two first become acquainted?” asked Anne, with irrepressible curiosity; for she saw that there was something far more than common in this happy rencontre. “Excuse my notes and queries, but why did neither of you ever

name the other till this minute? Lord Brentford may be proud of his gallantry, for he certainly had forgotten you, Mrs. Cousin, when writing verses on that elderly relation of his, Lady Janet; however you must forgive and forget such little aberrations,—

“’Twere a shame, when flowers around us rise,
To make light of the rest if the rose is n’t there;
And the world’s so rich in resplendent eyes,
’Twere a pity to limit one’s love to a pair.”

“I am about to table a proposal,” added Anne, eagerly. “Suppose we all tell each other our stories, as people did formerly in the ‘Arabian Nights.’ Mine is very interesting and romantic, having been almost entirely spent in a London boarding-school. My cousin’s here was chiefly passed, I believe, at one in Dublin; and now, Lord Brentford, tell us yours. We are both on the pins of curiosity to hear it. I suppose you were born of respectable parents in Shropshire?”

“Yes; but nearly all the romance of my life is yet to come,” answered the young peer, again turning his fascinated eyes to Theresa. “We are all only in our first chapter yet.”

“To be sure! I have three volumes of agony yet to suffer. We must all keep half-a-dozen secrets from each other, which might be told without any harm done, and which cause whole pages of unnecessary misery. Pray, Mrs. Cousin,

have you any secrets?" asked Anne, turning to Theresa, who hastily averted her head, and coloured deeply, but gradually afterwards, as memory brought its sting of self-reproach and anguish, every tinge of colour became drained from her cheek. She looked down with mournful emotion, and a tear glittered in her eye. "There now, a dead silence! You evidently are provided already with a secret," exclaimed Anne, triumphantly. "Will it be sufficient to cause three volumes of self-inflicted misery?"

"I fear it ought to be," answered Theresa, in a low, tremulous voice, from which all the life, spirit, and nonsense had vanished at once; and she added almost inaudibly, "How happy are those who can look with honest frankness in the face of every one, and say in perfect sincerity, 'I am all I seem, and all you think me!' From childhood every crooked or secret way has been hateful to me, and yet—and yet—"

Theresa turned hastily to the window, but not before Lord Brentford had seen that her face was bathed in tears, and her features convulsed with sudden grief, while she leaned her elbow on the window-frame, and her forehead on her hand. He dared not look again, as it was evident that Theresa shunned all notice; and for the first time in his life, Lord Brentford felt at a loss now what to say in the presence of youth and beauty. His

whole invention seemed to have failed him at once ; therefore, humming an opera tune, he leaned back in his chair, folded his arms, and fixed his eyes observingly on the ceiling.

Puppet, a small toy-terrier of Mrs. Brownlow's, the very phoenix of nature for diminutiveness, at this moment rushed into the room, and jumped into Theresa's arms, where he settled, with a confiding quite-at-home look, and instantly began barking with tiny violence at Lord Brentford, who laughed outright to see the little atom give tongue so ferociously. Theresa now became restored in some degree to her usual look of girlish, almost heedless vivacity, and to one of her usual glad bursts of juvenile laughter, when Lord Brentford said, in a tone of lively satire, "Your small friend there has taken the whole conversation to himself! Puppet evidently considers that he is one of the company ; and in some societies even the barking of a dog would be more entertaining than what people say. Puppet tells me that you and he both hope I shall improve our acquaintance. That I have too humble an opinion of myself, since no virtue is so seldom rewarded as humility. That he thought very little of me at first, but expects a great deal hereafter. Good dog! Wise little dog! This must be the original dog mentioned in the 'Arabian Nights,' which could be held in a walnut."

“ You are right. He arrived here in one last week, and it still serves for his kennel,” answered Theresa, looking round, her eyes still flashing with the tears she had so recently shed, and her face bright as an April morning. “ Puppet was brought from abroad to Mrs. Brownlow yesterday, by Sir Richard. He has been taught many amusing tricks; but I am intrusted with his education in manners and morals now, and he is learning the dog language grammatically. Now, Puppet, show how well bred you are! Show how you will die for me.”

“ We could all do that, so I need not be taught,” observed Lord Brentford laughingly, teasing the irritable little creature. “ It would be a contemptible dog that could hesitate to die in earnest for you any day! I should envy Puppet for being allowed this instant to expire at your feet.”

“ Puppet! what can we say to this polite gentleman?” said Theresa, with a grave air and laughing eye. “ This is evidently the ghost of Sir Charles Grandison! Tell him we shall run away after the next very civil speech. Tell him he must try to speak more like other people.”

“ When you look more like other people, I shall talk so,” replied Lord Brentford, smilingly watching Theresa, while she placed a morsel of biscuit on Puppet’s nose, which the well-trained animal

jerked into the air, and snapped up greedily. "When you begin to treat me as well as Puppet, your favourite there, I shall become quite as obedient and sagacious. Now tell me, pray, when I first appeared before you this morning so unexpectedly, what did you think?"

"Think! I had not a minute to think," replied Theresa. Then, seeing Lord Brentford's eyes flashing with interest, she added, maliciously, "I was expecting a person from Cramer's to tune the piano, and felt glad he was come."

"Well! if on any terms you were glad to see me, I shall endeavour to be delighted," answered Lord Brentford, gaily; "hereafter you must positively learn to enjoy solitude for two rather than for one, as I never mean to be out of your sight. My excuse for standing so long moon-struck at the door, hearing more than I ought to have heard, and not sooner making you aware of my presence, is such a poor one that—"

"That perhaps it would be of no use if produced," said Theresa, her face dimpling with the brightest of smiles. "Your attempt to look penitent is quite a signal failure!"

"Tell me then seriously, did you recognise me at once, or had you forgotten me altogether?"

"I mistook you at first for one of the Mysteries of London," replied Theresa, laughing malignantly, her eyes brimming over with merriment; "or

perhaps for what the abigail-world calls ‘A Portuguese foreigner.’”

“That shows I am become sun-burned and ugly; but like all ugly people, I am so delightfully amiable! so very domestic, and all that sort of thing. You really must try to like me. One cannot enjoy warmth in this horrid climate without sunshine; but we must apply at the weather office to have that remedied, for the sake of delicate complexions, like yours and mine.”

“For my own part I do not complain. The air is enchanting! It is spring, with a thought of summer,” answered Theresa. “Such a day makes me feel only fifteen.”

“It would be impossible to make you feel much more. You look anything but old, and anything but ugly,” replied Lord Brentford, sitting down at the piano, on which instrument he excelled, and playing half in jest, though his voice became, as he proceeded, instinct with emotion, an accompaniment to these words of Moore’s—

“Believe me, if all those endearing young charms
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Were to change by to-morrow, and fleet in my arms,
Like fairy-gifts fading away,

“Thou would’st still be admired, as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will,
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.”

Theresa had fallen into a tumult of blushes at these words, so obviously addressed to herself, when at this moment Mrs. Brownlow sailed into the room, with a step dignified as that of Mrs. Kean in Katherine of Arragon, and affectedly wrapped up in so many shawls, comforters, cloaks, boas and veils, that it appeared as if she were about to be banished into Siberia. Her whim was, to be supposed always in the most delicately precarious health, and it became a prodigious affront in any one to suppose her capable of ever enjoying anything so rude as robust health. Mrs. Brownlow, with her full-blown peony face, and full-spread rustling dignity, could not manage to look quite in a consumption, but she could scarcely have exacted more sympathy on her death-bed than she did every day from every mortal who would listen to her complaints.

It was astonishing what Mrs. Brownlow suffered; and yet she never looked the worse, nor ate the less, nor gave up a single pleasant engagement. Every complaint with a particularly long name she thought it graceful and interesting to suffer from; and certainly nothing is so incurable as hypochondria. A mere vulgar sore throat, or a common-place, low-minded attack of rheumatism, would have shocked her ideas of fashion; but bronchitis, neuralgia, dyspepsia, were all good drawing-room subjects of discussion, and also

formed a pretext for many a pleasant continental excursion to all the drinkable waters of Germany.

Mrs. Brownlow now, in a fit of ill-humoured dignity, called Puppet to her with a thousand coaxing expressions, but the wilful plaything seemed very little disposed to obey the arbitrary summons, and merely acknowledged Mrs. Brownlow's attention by slightly cocking his ears, and then laying them back. Another more imperative call from his indignant mistress produced only an almost invisible wag of his tail, but not a momentary idea of obedience. Theresa was all this time clandestinely urging the little creature to go; but the only answer was a low whine, and the bright, clear eyes wilfully fixed on Theresa, as much as to say that nothing but force should part them; while Anne vainly seconded her mother's endeavours, and Lord Brentford smilingly looking on, whispered to Theresa the old nursery rhyme—

“When the rain raineth, and the goose winketh,
The gosling knows what the goose thinketh.”

It became a real perplexity now what to do, as Mrs. Brownlow felt more jealous of Puppet's preference than of her husband's or children's; therefore Theresa, in a perfect panic, hurriedly pushed the little sprite off her knee. The affronted favourite now crept slowly, with lagging step, a very little way towards Mrs. Brownlow's extended

hand, crouching as if it expected to be beaten; then in a sudden caprice whirled itself round, sprung again into the lap of Theresa, looked wistfully up in her face, and afterwards barked vociferously at his astonished and angry mistress. It was a most decided refusal of any nearer intercourse, while Mrs. Brownlow, always irritable and envious, became indignant to perceive that, from Lord Brentford down to Puppet, every living thing loved Theresa and preferred her to all others. Anne's eyes had made signals from the family telegraph that she was not herself pleased, and Mrs. Brownlow now turned with sneering civility to Theresa, saying,

"You make rapid progress in the affections of all who enter this house! It must be a pleasure to feel deserving of Puppet's esteem. Dogs in general are apt to find people's real merits out, and their actual position in life also; I do not know whether my Puppet has any genius that way."

"I should guess he had," observed Lord Brentford, glancing at Theresa, whose face had become the deepest crimson while thus addressed. "At least there is one subject on which Puppet and I are quite agreed, in which, I believe, you and I and every mortal will coincide."

"Never take my opinions for granted on any topic," replied Mrs. Brownlow, assuming a play-

ful tone, and fixing her eyes ill-naturedly on Theresa's face, burning with annoyance, while Lord Brentford clandestinely watched the beautiful rose-tint glowing more and more deeply on her transparent cheek. "I shall soon, perhaps, have to tell something you may like to hear, Lord Brentford, or something you may not,—but see whether we shall all think as we do now a hundred years hence."

"That is a somewhat long time to anticipate, but I can answer for my own constancy of opinion as long as the world continues to go round," answered the young peer in a low and very earnest voice, the profound emotion expressed in which more and more irritated Mrs. Brownlow, as he added, "I never remember in my life to have changed my mind about anything."

"Then you will do so once for all soon," replied Mrs. Brownlow, glancing malignantly at Theresa, now scarlet with agitation. "I have been deceived sometimes, but not at present. Old birds are not caught with chaff!"

"I must, of course, be the chaff, begging my own pardon for saying so! You evidently mean me, but the old bird cannot by possibility imply any allusion to yourself," observed Lord Brentford politely, being desirous to divert all remarks from Theresa, who was obviously making a resolute struggle with herself to look composed. "I

like old proverbs as well as you do, Mrs. Brownlow, and must quote one on your behalf, 'No lady is old till she feels old, or till she looks old!'"

Mrs. Brownlow felt propitiated by the extreme politeness of Lord Brentford's tone, and looked exceedingly benignant, shaking out the folds of her rich brocaded dress, with a self-satisfied glance at several mirrors, very skilfully placed so as to reflect her in profile, in full face, behind, before, and all round. Her toilet was perfect, and Mrs. Brownlow felt it so, as she said in a facetious tone, but looking sharply round at the indignant Theresa, "We elderly beauties are somewhat indebted to the dressmakers. One ought to pay them well, poor creatures, for rising early and going to bed late that their betters may be adorned. Poor wretches, how I pity them!"

"There are persons even more to be pitied," answered Theresa in a low accent of such intense emotion that Lord Brentford started. "If those over-tasked girls have a clear conscience then they may sleep the little they do sleep, and eat the little they do eat, in peace. I pity far more those misled into evil against their will, against their feelings, against every right and holy impulse. These are utterly, utterly miserable, even though surrounded by every luxury that can be crowded around them by those they serve, by those to obey whom they have sinned."

Mrs. Brownlow, her lips still quivering with passionate irritation, felt now that she had gone too far—dangerously far—in allowing her malignant jealousy of Theresa to triumph over prudence in taunting her by what she said, and the more so when Lord Brentford suddenly exclaimed,—

“*À propos* of very early rising, I once upon a time was tantalized by an apparition in broad daylight, so very like you that I could at the moment have sworn to your identity. We were leaving the Duke of Doncaster’s ball at morning dawn, when nothing is to be seen but market carts for Covent Garden, or milk-women carrying their pails, when suddenly, somehow or other, beneath the very wheels of my chariot I saw, carrying a little milliner’s basket, a vision so like you that—”

“This is a bad time for telling ghost stories, therefore pray postpone yours till we light a farthing candle to glimmer in the armoury to-night,” interrupted Mrs. Brownlow, rising hastily, for she could have bit off her tongue with vexation to see the fire that burned angrily on Theresa’s cheek, and to think that her own words had stirred it up into a blaze.

While the lively, rattle-pated, reckless Lord Brentford stood smilingly awaiting some animated rejoinder in her usual merry style from Theresa, he became suddenly aware how painful had

become the confusion glowing on the most beautiful countenance he had ever beheld. His perplexity gradually grew into the utmost astonishment, as he observed her increasing agitation with a degree of interest not to be expressed by word or look, for the seeds were planted in his heart of a refined, respectful, pure, and lasting attachment, which caused him now to consider Theresa's feelings much more than his own, therefore he turned away as if totally unobservant of her obvious confusion.

There were other eyes than Lord Brentford's fixed in amazement on Theresa's changing countenance, and they were the eyes of one who felt both the right and the inclination to probe to the very bottom what was the mystery which had so suddenly drained the colour from Theresa's lately glowing cheek, and cast her eyes, with a look of shame and confusion, on the floor.

Sir Richard had been standing for some time beside the group of talkers, listening with good-humoured enjoyment, an intelligent smile twinkling in his eye, to all that passed, but when he observed latterly the insidious glance of Mrs. Brownlow at Theresa, and perceived the withering effect produced by her apparently significant words, his resolution was at once taken. The Baronet, being more open than the day himself, had always detested small mysteries, and the

affectionate interest, kind as that of a father, which he felt in the happiness of his pretty niece, made him resolve that he would now make a plunge into her confidence to draw out if possible the secret sting of Mrs. Brownlow's innuendoes. Sir Richard had always possessed a peculiar power of interpreting the most transient looks, the most accidental glances of those who interested him, and he now saw plainly that something was very much amiss between Theresa and Mrs. Brownlow. A very painful pause had ensued in the conversation when he at once advanced frankly towards Theresa, who received him with a nervous start of evident alarm, and said to the dismayed girl in his very kindest voice, "Can you spare five minutes to an old uncle, Theresa? Perhaps I may use that mysterious word 'business' to account for wishing to have a few minutes with you alone."

When Theresa rose like one in a dream to accompany Sir Richard, his extended arm seemed absolutely necessary to support her faltering steps, as she advanced dejectedly towards the library door. Her whole movements were expressive of languid, spent depression, she looked at the moment crushed, subdued, as if there could be for her no second summer, no spring-tide of cheerfulness. It became evident to both Sir Richard and Lord Brentford that some fearful conflict was going on in her heart, and deep

was the sigh of oppression which Theresa heaved now, as if a weight not to be borne had suddenly fallen on her spirit as she slowly withdrew.

“Poor thing!” exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, affecting to look compassionately after Theresa, “She lives in terror of that uncle! Did you see, the moment he entered, how she coloured and trembled? Sir Richard’s presence quite overlays all Theresa’s cheerfulness.”

“Was that all?” said Lord Brentford in a tone of relief. “How one may be deceived by appearances. Sir Richard looks so noble, so benevolent, and so clever, that I really wished myself his nephew,—perhaps I do still. I almost feared that Miss Brownlow was angry at my comparing her to that milliner girl.”

“It was not the most flattering of all comparisons, and Theresa has a spice of the Tartar in her disposition,—so different from dear Anne!” replied Mrs. Brownlow carelessly. “Girls will show temper sometimes, and there is not a more spoiled girl in England, Ireland, Wales, and the Colonies than Theresa. My husband is so devoted to his brother’s only child.”

“Surely, Miss Brownlow has a sister?” asked Lord Brentford; and seeing Mrs. Daniel become excessively confused, he added: “There certainly were two.”

“Once!” added Mrs. Brownlow, gravely. “But

that is a subject we can scarcely speak upon. Her sister was drowned in a most calamitous shipwreck off the shores of Ireland; but the most distant allusion to that subject is, of course, very painful in this house."

Lord Brentford stood aghast with amazement and consternation. He had long entertained rather misanthropical notions respecting the ease with which people now get over family bereavements, but on this occasion he felt startled and shocked that so sudden, so great a calamity, within a very few months, as it must have been, had made no deeper impression on Theresa. He recalled at this moment the look of tearful and unaccountable anguish with which she had turned away once during their recent conversation, and he told himself that she was certainly both paler and thinner; but such a calamity as Fanny's death, even Lord Brentford thought, should have made a deeper and more obvious impression.

"A stoic might envy her such indifference; but I do not," he observed, after imparting all that had passed to Captain Clifford, who was overwhelmed with grief and astonishment. "In these times this is the way of the world! The excitement and bustle of railways and steamboats have really driven all sentiment out of the world. Nobody has time to think or feel. Nothing lasts six months now!—not six days! If you mention

the greatest event twice over you are considered slow—a perfect bore! Still, that beautiful girl, Fanny, lost at sea, and her sister, within a very few months, looking as she does—it really is rather beyond what I can take in! Even a butterfly would have mourned longer, and much more deeply!—

‘ Ah! well may we hope, when this short life is gone,
To meet in some world of more permanent bliss;
For a smile, or a grasp of the hand, hastening on,
Is all we enjoy of each other in this!’ ”

Lord Brentford might have talked on for ever, but Captain Clifford remained silent as death, and quite as pale. He felt turned to marble by the shock of this unexpected disaster, and he resolved, *coute qui coute*, to relieve his own heart by seizing the first opportunity for asking every melancholy particular of the shipwreck from Theresa. He felt that it would console him, in this greatest of sorrows, if he could impart to her sister, as an excuse for all his inquiries, how deep and incurable was the sorrow with which he had heard of Fanny’s death, and how unbounded his astonishment! Never was the uncertainty of human life more affectingly impressed on the mind of man than on that of Captain Clifford now, when he withdrew hurriedly to his own room, locked the door, and sat down to think of Fanny.

“Who would seek or prize
Delights that end in aching?
Who would trust to ties
That every hour are breaking?”

Dinner that day was a mere pretence to Captain Clifford, whose head and heart ached in sorrowful impatience, while he watched for the earliest opportunity of asking for a solitary interview with Theresa. She certainly did look depressed enough that day to suit any event; for who would not have remarked her changing colour, her harassed look, her nervous excitement when spoken to, or even looked at.

“All has changed since we met in Ireland,” thought Captain Clifford. “But no wonder! The whole pantomime of life and society appears of no more interest to me now than if it were merely being acted over at a Marionette theatre, by a set of mechanical puppets. My whole existence to-day seems a strange, wild dream; and I have reflected more in an hour on the uncertainty and vanity of this transitory scene than during all my former years!”

“Captain Clifford,” said Theresa, who happened in the evening to be seated near him, “in remembrance of our having met five months ago, may I call myself an old acquaintance? I should regret to see any one look so sorrowful as you do to-day, yet I dared not have ventured to say one word on

the subject, but that now, for the twentieth time, I have observed you looking at me as if I were in some degree concerned in your affliction—as if I were even to blame!”

“In this perverse and torturing world I believe it is a mistake for any one to attempt to be happy; but you know, during our short intimacy in Ireland, how greatly I enjoyed myself—how, beyond all expression, I admired your poor sister Fanny,” said Captain Clifford, mournfully. “Think, then, what I must have felt to-day on hearing of her death!”

“Fanny! Fanny’s death!” exclaimed Theresa, starting from her seat in a wild agony of wonder and alarm. “Tell me what you mean! Tell me! Oh is the world itself about to crumble beneath my guilty feet? Speak! speak! Surely no ill has happened to my own Fanny! It must be some mistake!”

“How thankful I should be! Can that be possible?” exclaimed Captain Clifford, his whole countenance gleaming with a look of joyful relief. “Mrs. Brownlow told me she had been drowned in the frightful shipwreck of an emigrant vessel, off the Irish coast”—

“What a fable! what a strange, unheard-of dream! We had a perfectly calm and safe passage from Dublin. I saw Fanny well not a month since!” replied Theresa, hurriedly. Then, after a pause

for recollection, she added, in an under tone of fervent emotion, "No wonder you were shocked! and still more shocked for my apparent indifference. My only and very dear sister Fanny! could I have lost you and survived?"

"Then, where is she now?" asked Captain Clifford, eagerly. "Tell me where I may find her—how soon I shall see her here."

That question, so keenly spoken, restored Theresa to all her recollection. The perplexities in her present position rushed instantaneously into her thoughts. She coloured, stammered, covered her face with her hands, and turned aside, saying,—

"There are circumstances I dare not at present mention, Captain Clifford. No ill has happened to Fanny, I believe and trust,—none. But—but—do not name her in this house at present. Better times may come—worse they scarcely can be, for I am so utterly, utterly wretched! Things cannot long continue as they are; and, whatever befalls us, Fanny is blameless. Oh that the miserable Theresa were more like her! If Mrs. Brownlow would but explain all, what a relief to me that even the very worst should be known!"

Large tears stood in Theresa's eyes. her colour became deep as that of a rose in June, and there was unmistakeable misery in every feature, so that Captain Clifford, with a grave and friendly air, took her hand, saying,—

“It strikes me, Miss Brownlow, though I have no right to make any notes or queries, that something peculiarly painful is on your mind. I am an old hand, having often had to give and take advice in my day; and often find that the fear of evil exceeds all the evils we fear. I can always be wise for others, though not for myself. Let me, then, this once advise you. Whatever be your anxiety or sorrow, take some one into partnership, and open your mind fully to any trustworthy friend. Happy as any one would be—must be—to serve you, I dare not, of course, offer myself when you have relations—your uncle, for instance, Mr. Brownlow—”

“He! the cause of all this mischief! Oh! I would be torn by wild horses rather than trust him,” interrupted Theresa, glowing with almost stern indignation. “I am greatly obliged for your sympathy, Captain Clifford, very greatly, and wish with all my heart I might take your advice. That good, kind Sir Richard has appointed to meet me in the library this evening, and, perhaps—but, no! oh, no! To speak out all that rankles in my mind would be too much happiness!—more than I deserve! Alas! alas! the lamp of hope has been shattered in my hands for ever and ever!”

As Lord Brentford, in the meanwhile, observed Theresa from a distance with admiring interest, he felt some tinge of jealousy that Captain Clif-

ford seemed so deep in her confidence, while both looked most unusually earnest and confidential. How lately Theresa had appeared to him a mere merry schoolgirl, with mirth enough for any six, when they parted in Ireland; but now, as she spoke to Captain Clifford, or listened to his apparently very serious replies, there was in her eye a far deeper sensibility than before—on her brow a darker shadow of thought—in her whole aspect something most intensely interesting. Not only feeling and sensibility, but intellect, shone out in every glance, while the frequent changes of Theresa's colour, and the sadder gentleness of her smile, indicated a deep and habitual anxiety. Lord Brentford felt that this shade of seriousness embellished her beauty, for who does not acknowledge that all which is finest in human nature connects itself with melancholy? Though once quite starry and almost startling in her brightness, the slight cloud now resting on her face seemed only, to Lord Brentford's eye, like mist over the sun, subduing, but not extinguishing its brilliancy.

"I did not think," he whispered to himself, "that it was in mortal to look so lovely! No picture I ever saw could equal that fresh and girlish face, in its thoughtful, nearly child-like beauty now: but I cannot longer stand this endless interview with Clifford! she is the only girl on earth that is worth marrying, and marry her I will! To

gain the love and sympathy of such a being, what would I not sacrifice! There may be a thousand impediments, but the more of these the better. My courtship shall be a perfect steeple-chase over every difficulty, even if I have in the first place to shoot Clifford, my best of friends, at twelve paces.

‘I could endure my own despair,
But not another’s hope.’ ”

Constant, unceasing thought, on any one subject, daguerreotypes it indelibly on the heart, and Lord Brentford now gave himself up to one absorbing sentiment, while he thought hourly and momentarily of Theresa; feeling an almost irresistible impatience to declare his attachment at once. “If she had not turned out to be the heiress of Torchester Abbey, I might immediately have tested all my hopes; but a girl so endowed might very naturally doubt the motive of an undying attachment being so suddenly professed! It is the penalty an heiress suffers for her wealth, that she cannot distinguish between a real and an artificial preference. Mine is so very real, that I only wish she could be, by some marvellous means, deprived of every shilling: then I might prove myself what I am—perfectly disinterested. In this house, however, I may find ample opportunity to gain her affection, if that be possible, and if Clifford do not get the start of me, as he

seems in a fair way to do ! Had we met only in London, one feeling drives out another so rapidly, and one fancy follows its predecessor at such a pace, that there is no time for a permanent sentiment to grow, but here, in the constant leisurely intercourse of a country life, every passing imagination may find time to become engraved on the heart, to ripen into a perfect attachment."

" Although this heart was early blown,
And fairest hands disturb'd the tree,
They only shook some blossoms down,
Its fruit has all been kept for thee."

MOORE.

CHAPTER III.

"Where bloom my native valley's flowers,
I had—oh, have I still a friend?"

BYRON.

THAT day, while Sir Richard seemed entirely occupied with dusting cayenne pepper upon his soup, he was seriously pondering over a short moment he had spent with his niece alone, suddenly interrupted by the hasty entrance of Daniel, who was evidently under great excitement. Not a word, a look, a nod, or a whisper of his brother, but Sir Richard now quietly observed, while seriously pondering what the whole scene around him could mean, and planning a counterplot to discover what were all the little mysteries by which he felt himself surrounded and purposely deceived. To Sir Richard, the solution of Daniel's mysteries always used to afford as much excitement and diversion as the solving of a conundrum, therefore he decided now to watch keenly every movement on the board. The only very deep interest Sir Richard as yet felt in the drama before him, arose, however, from the obvious perplexity and ill-concealed misery of his very beautiful, but evidently most unhappy niece.

It was with an air of grave and anxious consideration, then, that the dignified and thoughtful-looking Sir Richard once more led the way that evening for Theresa to follow him into the saloon, where he wished to have a few moments' more conversation with her alone, and her limbs trembled beneath her as he announced his request.

The noble-minded and single-hearted Baronet would have been astonished, had he fully known what an electric shock his few simple words asking Theresa to accompany him alone, occasioned to many around. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel exchanged a furtive glance of uncontrollable dismay, and Theresa, on entering the library, stood pale and aghast, her features pinched like those of a corpse. She seemed to wither where she stood, so intense was the effort necessary to give her an aspect of composure.

Sir Richard, when they sat down, fixed his eyes upon Theresa with a look of wondering regret; while he thought so long and deeply, that it seemed as if at length he had become unconscious of her presence. After a melancholy pause of several minutes, the kind-hearted Baronet started suddenly out of his painful reverie, and, with a look of most prepossessing kindness, took the hand of Theresa in his own, saying, with friendly energy of accent, and a look of searching interest in his benevolent eye,—

“ My dear young niece, tell me what it is that frightens you so much in my presence.”

“ Everything frightens me, and everybody,” replied Theresa, looking wildly round, as if anxious to escape. “ For a moment I sometimes forget it all; but I feel utterly and entirely wretched in society! I ought to do so! I was happy once, and forget sometimes to be miserable; but now I wish it were possible for me to live and die on a desert island alone.”

Theresa clasped her hands over her face with convulsive agony, and added, in accents of bitter anguish,—

“ It seems decreed that no one must love me. If you knew all, Sir Richard, even you, good and kind as you seem, would despise and hate the unhappy Theresa. Oh I was not always the wicked creature I have been turned into lately—so very lately. To think of what I was, and of what I am now become! Of all tortures on earth, the greatest is to despise oneself!”

Theresa crushed her hands together, wrenching round her fingers with almost frantic emotion; large tears stood in her eyes, and her lip quivered like that of a sorrowful infant. Sir Richard gazed anxiously at her, and meditated deeply before he answered, saying, in a tone of cheerful and affectionate encouragement,—

“ My dear Theresa, I am convinced you are no

worse than other people ; but you and I are in the house now with a relative whose machinations caused all the misery of my own early days. He shall not mar yours, if I can help it. My darling girl, never mind what any one in this house thinks of you, except Uncle Richard ; and remember, it is my duty, as well as my greatest pleasure, to make you happy. Let me, for once in my life, be the giver of good counsel, and let me, for a wonder, see it taken. My advice, then, is, to trust Uncle Richard entirely, and believe in his affectionate desire to serve you. Take me at once into the Bluebeard's chamber where all your secrets hang."

Sir Richard frankly held out his hand to Theresa, with so indulgent and beaming a smile, that it might well have been thought irresistible ; yet he was strangely disappointed, when his niece, with an almost hysterical exclamation of anguish, clenched her hands over her eyes, and bent down her head on the sofa. A moment afterwards, when she looked up, that white face expressed such a weight of woe, that she seemed as if crushed to the very earth, while there appeared a look of beseeching misery in her whole attitude that deeply interested the kind-hearted Sir Richard, though he was almost irritated at his niece's want of reciprocity in not speaking out her whole mind. After some moments of grave suspense, he again

tried to reassure the trembling girl, by adopting an encouraging taking-it-all-for-granted tone of badinage, while he said, though with evident sensibility also,—

“ I have long lived alone in the most distant land that the sun shines on, Theresa. Since you were born, I have been a wanderer in wild scenes and barbarous countries, among foreign faces, foreign customs, and foreign trials. I am now, therefore, a sort of amateur savage. None have loved me, and none for years exchanged with me the kind affections of life. Once I was young and happy in this house,—once the brightest hopes of earthly happiness appeared mine. Once all who saw my face appeared to love me; but now memory is to me in my old home like moonlight, only the reflection of brighter days. I seem entirely to have lost the happy art of attaching others. My brother’s eye shuns mine, and his words become hushed whenever I enter. His wife colours and stammers when I ask her the simplest question. They seem to look upon me as a perfect spy! Their daughter avoids me; and you, Theresa, you! the child of my favourite brother, creep into my presence as if I were an alligator from the Nile about to devour you.”

Sir Richard paused in very painful emotion, and then added, forcing a laugh, and looking with astonished and somewhat indignant vexation at

Theresa's increasing confusion, for her eyes remained fixed on the floor in painful perplexity, and it was only by a convulsive effort that she repressed a burst of tears:—

“ You seem unable to remain a moment in my presence without terror! You become pale, if I look at you, tremble if I touch you, and faint if I speak to you! Tell me, what does all this mean?” inquired Sir Richard, in a tone of increasing excitement. “ Are you never going to speak again while you live?” said he, smilingly holding out his hand to her. “ Come, this is not quite civil. Have I again crossed the threshold of my own home, once more entered this well-remembered door, seated myself by that fireside to which, through all my dangerous and painful wanderings, I have looked as my haven of happiness, where a warm-hearted welcome is all I ask; and is it, after all, to be a dreary wilderness of cold indifference, without one eye brightening up to mine, and sharing my undecaying memories?”

Sir Richard's emotion shook him to his very centre, as he added,—

“ Am I a ghost from another sphere? or have I so lost the habits and manners of society during my long seclusion, that even my own niece is in terror of me? Speak, Theresa! Tell me, now, is there any way in which you can be convinced

that I am your friend, as well as your very near relation?"

"Oh! that I deserved such a friend!" exclaimed Theresa, in a voice of wringing anguish. "Happy, how happy should I be as a mere beggar, Sir Richard, if I had such protection and such kindness as you offer; but I look around, and there is only for me utter wretchedness. Behind, before, above and below me, I see only grief and shame. I was tempted, driven, sold to sin and misery, and there seemed no resource. A solemn oath is upon me, from which I cannot be released. Curses and beggary, starvation and death, await all those I love, if my heart and conscience be not hardened to stone. Pity me, but ask me nothing! What, oh, what shall I do?"

"Trust your best friend, your own uncle, my very dear girl. Let me assist and protect you. This is some strange delusion. No such calamities as you describe can ever reach my darling Theresa!—not one. I have fortune more than enough for both; but your own also is secured beyond the reach of fate. It never can be alienated. Why shake your head and still look desponding? You will really irritate the best-natured uncle who ever was created!"

"I do not wonder!" said Theresa, in a low, touching voice, evidently exhausted with emotion. "The wonder is, Sir Richard, that you have

patience so long. All misery, compared to mine, is a mere mockery.”

“Your distress evidently is so frightfully real, Theresa, that I pity you deeply, though convinced that the whole affair is a trick of your imagination, or a trick of my brother Daniel’s. I would ask him to explain this, but he never goes straight to any point; and his crooked ways have extinguished all my confidence. If Daniel wanted a potato at dinner, formerly, he tried some finessing round-about manoeuvre always, with very sharp practice, to secure it. There never was anything upright or downright in his character. Never! I could not even trust him, formerly, to tell me what o’clock it was; and he would have concealed, if possible, which way the wind blew! Daniel is as double as—as a post-man’s knock!

‘He freely lent to all the poor—
Who left a pledge behind!
And never wanted a good word
From those who spoke his praise.’”

Theresa closed her large speaking eyes with an aspect of increasing perplexity, while there was a sad air of hopeless and helpless desolation about her entire look and attitude which filled Sir Richard with renewed astonishment. After gazing for some moments at the livid young face before him, he said, with sudden and vehement earnestness,—

"Tell me, Theresa, who has cheated you out of that happiness which is the birthright of all young and innocent girls? What is the mystery that evidently hangs over you? Surely I have a right to be told whatever concerns my own favourite niece. My affection, even though nothing else, gives me a claim. If my brother is aware of the circumstances, why should not I also be told?"

"He knows all," replied Theresa, in a low quivering whisper, which ended in a deep sob. "Ask him!"

"I thought so!" exclaimed Sir Richard, emphatically. "There never occurred mischief in this house formerly that was not traced, sooner or later, to Daniel. I thought so! The instant my eye caught his, I saw that he had been at some of his old tricks. Mystery!—mystery!—mystery! He would have concealed, if possible, formerly, his own name! Theresa, do you suppose I could have passed my boyhood under the shadow of such a brother, cheated for ever by his cunning, and not know Daniel at last? Now, tell me all; whatever is your difficulty, trust me to pull you through."

"Impossible!—oh, how impossible! That there are secrets, I dare not deny; but they must not be told. The misery of keeping them may kill me, like the Spartan boy in history,—I wish it would; but to explain myself is impossible," said

Theresa, while her heart beat thick and fast. She dashed her handkerchief across her eyes, to dry off the glittering tears. The colour fled from her cheek like breath from a mirror; she opened her livid corpse-like lips, and spoke again, saying, in accents of penitent despondency, "If you have any compassion, Sir Richard, do not say elsewhere that I acknowledged the existence of a mystery."

"Depend upon me," answered the kind-hearted Baronet, while Theresa's head hung down in sorrow, and her long, wet eye-lashes rested on her cheek; "but I shall trace out Daniel's secret. There is not a doubling or winding of that fox, my exemplary brother, that I am not accustomed of old to follow scent after. Perhaps I may remain at home on purpose. My mere presence here would, I fear, be punishment enough for all his misdeeds; and then, before a week is out, I shall discover all."

"When you do, Sir Richard, pardon me, the wretched tool of a thousand deceits?" asked Theresa, passionately clasping her hands, and looking tearfully in his face.

Sir Richard's whole attention became absorbed now in admiration of that agitated countenance, almost angelic in its marvellous beauty; and he affectionately took Theresa's hand, saying, "My dear niece, a heart of stone would forgive you anything. I only forbid your being unhappy, and

making me so. I am here a rich and lonely man, returned from a long life of solitary exertion, to enjoy among my relatives one short holiday of mutual kindness and pleasure. Let it then, be so; for it is an absolute necessity of human nature to be loved, of mine particularly, and no man deserving the name of man can be independent of mutual affection—none. Let me, then, see you smile—not a spectral smile such as that, but one real smile of happiness, fit for youth and beauty like yours, my very dear niece. The sunshine would rest on my heart then, old and withered though it be, without a tie on earth to happiness but your welfare,—

‘To-night, at least, to-night be gay,
Whate’er to-morrow brings;
Come, chase that starting tear away,
Ere mine to meet it springs.’ ”

Theresa’s countenance lighted up with an expression of kind sympathy and of the deepest sensibility; while Sir Richard, in a voice of intense pathos, continued: “All at Torchester have disappointed and grieved me. You, my dear girl, most of all; because from you I expected my chief enjoyment. Daniel’s daughter, Anne, could only, at best, have inherited a snowball for a heart; but you seem full of sensibility,—gifted with only too much for your own peace,—why have you no affectionate trust in me?”

Tears forced themselves through Theresa's closed eyelids, and fell in large silent drops unheeded on the ground; while Sir Richard hurried on in a tone of fervid eloquence—"Give me, then, some of your affection; give me some of your confidence; let me see you enjoy some of the elastic spirits and careless pleasures of girlhood; be merry and joyous as I wish to see you. Do not cloud over my short glimpse of home, by seeming so unaccountably afraid of my presence. Let me have a short dream of felicity, even if it be only a dream. I would enjoy a delusion of home happiness now, though it were but a delusion. There is evidently some secret cause for which you scorn yourself; but I feel assured, dear Theresa, that when this mighty mystery is at last cleared up, the blame will all rest on the broad shoulders of my brother, or he is not Daniel Brownlow. Be like a happy child again, Theresa, thinking neither of the past nor of the future; and trust to me for becoming silently, but most watchfully, your guardian from all future evil."

Sir Richard held out his hand to Theresa, with one of those rare intellectual smiles, full of benignity and goodness, which were like no other person's smile, saying in conclusion—"Now, Theresa, no disappointing the best of uncles! As I wish to see you cheerful, be so now, and let the future take care of itself. In this world, it is

always happiest to take short views of life. Am I happy at this moment?—am I likely to continue happy all to-day? Then, do not cloud over the present hours with untrustful fears of any future sorrow, that may never, perhaps, come. As to myself, I have not for many weeks spoken to friend or foe; therefore, whichever you are, dear Theresa, let us have some pleasant minutes together. There is no use in being miserable about what may happen to-morrow, or next year, or may never happen at all. I've enough of light and wing left for a few gay soarings yet!"

When Sir Richard and his niece rejoined the family circle, Daniel gave a hurried and agitated glance over the edge of his newspaper, to scan the countenances of both, with a look of pale apprehensive curiosity; but that short glimpse reassured his courage. He was in great awe of his brother—he had been so from boyhood; but never had it been so strongly the case as now, when, behind the shelter of his "Morning Post," he crouched in evident agony of suspense. Daniel saw at once the look of careless unconsciousness which Sir Richard had assumed to deceive his wily brother, and then Mr. Brownlow emerged from concealment, restored to all his wonted swagger; while the Baronet felt strong in his resolution to search every corner and cranny of his brother's very crooked mind with the candle of suspicion, and to

discover the strange secret which Theresa was evidently most unwilling to keep, though most unaccountably bound by oath to hoard.

Daniel had always, like men of small minds, delighted in small mysteries; and Sir Richard, accustomed from his boyhood to unravel these, felt little doubt of ultimately doing so now, while it was with a strange smile of sorrowful, self-pitying remembrance that, at this moment, he looked back on his own boyish dreams of unbounded felicity with Emily Plantagenet, all blighted and withered by the underhand machinations of the wily brother Daniel, now sitting beside him with his usual smile of obsequious complaisance.

Sir Richard had always, from long experience, a bad opinion of any one who wore an invariable smile, believing it a mask to conceal something amiss, and never had he seen Daniel smile so incessantly, so almost convulsively, as this day. Nothing that Mr. Brownlow said, did, or looked was natural, and nothing became lost on Sir Richard,—nothing ever was! He strolled up towards the ancient gothic window, and old memorials crowded into his mind of days filled with love, hope, and happiness,—of days when, as a boy there, he played at cricket with Frank, sailed his tiny boats on the Thames, or chased a butterfly across the daisied meadow. Hours of more matured happiness Sir Richard scarcely dared to

remember, when his young heart had beaten with its first romantic love for Emily Plantagenet. Within that sacred corner of the mind where all men treasure up their deepest and dearest feelings, there gleamed again the light of other days, when Sir Richard thought of that lovely and gifted Emily whom he had haunted with his boyish assiduities during so many anxious years, whose image had been his ceaseless companion in distant lands, whom even yet he had been unable since his arrival to name, and whom it had still been his first and fondest wish in returning home once more to see, even though he believed her given to another.

The same window, the same fragile panes of glass, the same branch of an old oak-tree through which Sir Richard in early boyhood had gazed towards Athelstone, still stood there unchanged, while all that breathed the breath of life within had altered from youth to age! It seems sometimes as if man, conscious of his own dignity in being the greatest work of God's creation, expected the very elements to sympathise with his joys or sorrows, and Sir Richard now felt as if the sun to-day shone brighter in honour of his restoration to the long-forsaken home of his boyhood, and of his restoration to all those local attachments which neither time nor circumstances had been able to extinguish from his kindest of hearts; yet—

"On earth is known to none
The smile that is not sister to a tear!"

Anne Brownlow in the drawing-room, meanwhile, was executing some Italian bravura songs, with a small shrill voice that sounded like a mouse in a cupboard, varied by here and there a little shriek which resembled a wild hyena, and the gentlemen were keeping up a lively nonsensical dialogue, some snatches of which Sir Richard could not but hear, when Captain Clifford, in his wonted comical spirits turned to Anne, exclaiming, in an overdone rapture of delight, "That is the very essence of the Opera! Really, St. Cecilia herself was a mere ballad-singer in comparison of you. I wish the fashion still existed, Miss Brownlow, of becoming a Troubadour, and I should bring my guitar under your windows to-night."

"When you are at the opera, Miss Brownlow, I always wish to be there myself, as certainly Grisi invariably sings her very best for you!" added Lord Brentford slyly, "At the amateur concert, she undoubtedly was very jealous of you."

"There is no box in the whole house to equal yours, Lord Brentford!" exclaimed Anne, affectedly. "When there I always feel, if Grisi pauses, as if I ought myself to take a part next, and being seated almost on the stage, should begin to sing."

"Pray do!" exclaimed Captain Clifford, laughing; "I shall bespeak a stall whenever you appear

and assist the applause. *À propos* of public appearances, Brentford, when the dear, good Commander-in-Chief and I were holding each other by the button, and chatting pleasantly together at the War-office yesterday, he asked me, in his usual good-humoured, intimate, off-hand way, what cavalry regiment your splendid mustachoes belong to. He admires them immensely. Davenport's, as he remarked, are like two old tooth-brushes, and are fit only for the Peace establishment; but yours look as if they had fought several campaigns in the East."

"So they shall!" replied Lord Brentford, in an indolent voice, like a prolonged yawn; "I should have disdained, during peace, to take her Majesty's shilling; but in these stirring times now, really it would be worth while to become a soldier, especially after hearing a certain fair lady's strictures in this house on those who remain ingloriously at home. One might procure the very best cigars at Constantinople, and you know, as the old song says, it is only the bravest of the brave that may hope to gain the fairest of the fair!"

"I have often proposed that we should make a grand gastronomic tour round the world together. Brentford, in order to test everything in the greatest perfection where it grows," added Captain Clifford, laughing. "We must go to Spain for an omelette, to Persia for a pillau, to Calcutta for a

mango, to New York for a canvas-backed duck, and to the Crimea for gunpowder and cannon; but, I suspect, the most deadly weapon you are ever likely to carry anywhere will be a knife and fork, Brentford; your most arduous campaign will take place, I foresee, on the floor of Almacks, armed with a fan."

"You are no clairvoyant, Clifford," replied Lord Brentford, with a grave, quiet laugh; "exertion is the best of all tonics for the mind, and many a great man is lost to the world for want of motive and opportunity. I must not be like a cat, sitting by the fireside, and purring my own praises to myself, but I could be quite in the Mark Tapley school of suffering philosophically if necessary. What soldiers ever fought so brilliantly as the guards at Waterloo? You would have supposed them more fitted for the ball-room at Brussels than for the conflict that followed, yet was ever man so mistaken?"

'While the moss of the valley grew red with their blood,
They stirr'd not, but conquer'd and died.'

"It remains to be proved whether I am born to blush for myself unseen, or not. England used to be thought a mere nation of shopkeepers; our soldiers all born since Waterloo, and never having seen a gun fired, would scarcely know, it was thought, how to face one; and Wellington said, we had

not a general who could be supposed able, if he had led a brigade into Hyde Park, to manœuvre it out again ; but how different has been the result ! ”

“ True, never had England so much reason to be proud of her army,” answered Captain Clifford with animation. “ Everything against us ! A bold, skilful, persevering enemy, practised in all the tactics of war, armed with guns and powder bought from our own manufacturers ; so that we are like the eagle killed by an arrow feathered from his own wing. The climate Generals January and February sweeping down their thousands ; hunger and starvation, produced by an inexperienced commissariat, destroying whole battalions ; the very heavens warring against us with thunder and hurricanes, such as are scarcely remembered by the oldest inhabitant ; and a sea of mud fit only for an ichthysaurus before the deluge ; yet, amidst all that ever was suffered or imagined by man, English pluck and English patriotism is conquering an enemy on their own shores, mastering ten to one.

‘ Fifty thousand they came to our seven,
Mad drunk with religion and rum ;
But we dash’d at their grey-coated columns,
That swept round us front, lads, and flank.

* * * *

‘ Six times there they fought their way in, boys,
Six times, boys, we tumbled them out.’ ”

BENNET.

“‘Go where glory waits thee!’ as the tailor said to the uniforms,” added Lord Brentford, smiling. “It is not doing justice to our own army not to do justice to the bravery of those they are conquering. Next time a battle takes place, may I be there to see !”

“It seems as if the animadversions of that beautiful Theresa, which you heard so accidentally, had acted like the spear of Ithuriel in arousing you, Brentford. No man would rejoice more than your cousin, Frederick Clifford, if you choose to take a start into active life in the heroic style now. Many of your ancestors gained medals and lost limbs in the service of their country ; and why should you not imitate that old fellow in armour, wearing a star, who is frowning on you out of his frame there now ? In these days, when every private as well as every officer is a perfect Quintus Curtius for his country, your ancestor never had a better opportunity to distinguish himself than you and I now.”

“He shall one day become proud of his descendant, as I am of my predecessor,” replied Lord Brentford, in a tone so completely between jest and earnest that the lively Captain felt quite mystified, especially as his cousin instantly changed the subject, saying—“The only thing at all snobbish I ever saw about you, Clifford, is that enormous, schoolboy-looking ring with a strange device,—an

ape's head apparently, cut out on an oriental onyx ! ”

“ It came rather curiously into my hands and on my finger,” answered Captain Clifford, whirling the ring round for closer examination. “ The maid who attended my poor mother on her death-bed, and is now abigail in this house, Madame Fleurie, is very well connected. She entreated me yesterday to buy this, as she is in the immediate want of ten pounds. The ring was given to her twelve years ago by a brother, who is in a higher position and better circumstances than herself, with injunctions not to let it be seen while he lived ; therefore her poverty, rather than her will, made Madame Fleurie bring it to me confidentially, instead of selling this bauble publicly in a shop ; and though the thing is too ugly for a gentleman to exhibit on his hand, yet, as Madame Fleurie, my mother's old attendant, wished my aid in this pawnbroking transaction, I consented to wear the ring till she could redeem it back to her own custody.”

When Lord Brentford first mentioned the strange device on Captain Clifford's ring, Sir Richard started round with a look of astonishment, and hurriedly advanced a few steps. He now requested permission to inspect the engraving, and his extended hand trembled as he grasped it, while a low exclamation of sorrowful amazement

broke from the Baronet's lips as he examined that stone, saying "How often I have longed to know what became of this ring! It was my own parting schoolboy gift to my murdered brother Francis. He promised never but with his latest breath to let it be taken off his finger, and I am sure he never would. This ring, then, witnessed his death, and was torn from his hand afterwards by the assassin."

"But," asked Captain Clifford, "are you perfectly certain of not being mistaken in the identity?"

"Impossible! See, here are our initials,—*"F. B. e dono R. B., till death do us part."* The man who took my brother's life, in the same hour took this ring. I remember hearing that poor Frank's finger was frightfully mangled. Let me see the person who brought it to you."

"That may easily be done, as she lives in this house," replied Captain Clifford, looking with compassionate interest at the agitated countenance of Sir Richard, pale with sorrowful surprise. "Meanwhile, keep that ring to which you have undoubtedly a most sacred claim. How very extraordinary a coincidence that it should be found in this very house! Madame Fleurie says her brother, Terence O'Grady, is without exception the very best of men; therefore he will most gladly afford you every information. There never was a more enterprising, zealous, and earnest philanthropist

than this O'Grady, his sister tells me; constantly endeavouring by every possible means, sometimes rather strange ones apparently, to increase his own influence, that he may influence others for good."

"O'Grady!" exclaimed Sir Richard, starting, "Really, Ovid's *Metamorphosis* appears nothing compared to this man's. He is heard of everywhere: I must see him instantly. O'Grady's name appeared in all the black annals of my poor brother's calamitous death. Let him come to me without delay, and account for his possession of this ring."

"He is expected from Rome next week," replied Captain Clifford; "meanwhile, if you wish to hear a panegyric upon him, send for his sister, Madame Fleurie. She is Mrs. Brownlow's abigail, and she can draw tears from her own eyes, at least, in speaking of his merits. According to her notions, many a worse saint has been canonized by a diploma from the Pope."

CHAPTER IV.

“ Ere such a soul regain its blissful state,
How often must it love, how often hate !
How often hope, despair, resent, regret,
Conceal, disdain—do all things but forget.”

YOUNG.

THE much and justly-lamented Fanny, then, was not really quite so dead as Captain Clifford had apprehended. No! on the contrary, she considered herself, when under Miss Plantagenet's roof, the happiest of the happy among living mortals. With a deep and serious thankfulness she looked often back on the dark pit of wretchedness from which her kind benefactress had generously rescued her; and far from considering that her great obligations were a heavy burden, she delighted, had that been possible, even to magnify her sense of them.

Day after day it was a ceaseless enjoyment to Fanny when she found herself treated with rational and intellectual friendship, talked to and sympathised with, while her whole good and excellent heart became open as day to Emily Plantagenet. She and Mr. Mortimer, who both loved the best

side of human nature, found it a refreshing sight now to observe one so perfectly guileless as Fanny, so full of clear, transparent intellect, as well as of high principle.

It was no indolent felicity that Miss Plantagenet could enjoy, for her whole ideas of pleasure were linked to strenuous exertion; and finding her young *protégée* almost equally active in every well-intended enterprise, she smiling, said one day—

“According to the doctrine of sympathy, we who agree so perfectly must have been created to live and die together.”

When the two friends became at length settled for the summer at Athelstane castle, Emily resumed all her usual duties as a landed proprietor, not only in improving the place, but chiefly in improving the people. Her establishment was a model of good order: in truth the whole life, character, and belongings of Emily were a model of consistent excellence, while she sometimes smilingly said, “My ambition is to render my own future life the perfection of old-maidism, but not entirely devoted, as that might perhaps imply, to an establishment of cats, dogs, cockatoos, bullfinches, and parrots.”

Emily had more than half-resolved to volunteer on the noble enterprise of becoming a nurse to attend the wounded heroes of Sebastopol, and there was a solemn dignified energy in the spirit

with which she contemplated this act of truly feminine heroism ; but meanwhile her whole fortune she considered a trust, a sacred deposit, to be usefully spent in that neighbourhood from which the whole was derived. In Emily the villagers at Athelstane ever found a considerate and firm friend,—her sole object was to encourage all that is good or excellent in heart and conduct. While Emily indulged her love of the beautiful by adorning Athelstane, she likewise employed all the industrious poor, she taught their children, she visited their sick, and she gratified her own rational tastes by entering into every innocent rural occupation. Miss Plantagenet delighted in her greenhouse, her aviary, her poultry, her bees, and her garden. Emily's greatest happiness was to promote enjoyment among her poorer neighbours ; and the villagers had permission every Sunday to walk freely about her grounds, and even into her garden, that there they might in religious leisure admire the wonderful beauties of God's glorious creation. The number and variety of Miss Plantagenet's roses might have astonished even a London nurseryman, and eclipsed Covent Garden itself. The truest pleasures of English life, and its best happiness are found in promoting the good of others throughout a life of active tranquillity, while forgetting that such a word as *self* exists, except for the exercise of benevolence, justice,

and piety, with "charity that shuns the light, and goodness, blushing to reveal its own excellence." The life and character of Emily were indeed beautiful to behold. She simply and unaffectedly lived for others, glowing in heart with a fervent desire to diffuse around her an atmosphere of felicity. Nevertheless, to Fanny's keen observation, rendered more acute by attachment to the most generous of benefactresses, it became evident that Miss Plantagenet's projects of happiness were all for others. In a most remarkable degree she had obviously no plans, no wishes for herself; Emily went through the daily duties of life with an earnest business-like application, that never faltered nor swerved in its onward course, but she always seemed to forget that there was in the world such a person as herself.

"I perceive," observed Fanny, in the full tide of that cordial, confidential intimacy, which Miss Plantagenet not only allowed but encouraged, "you form schemes for the future felicity of every living mortal except one. Why is no single thought ever given to the happiness of my best friend on earth. Has nature forgotten entirely to give you the instinct of selfishness?"

A pause of some moments succeeded this question, during which Emily laid her hand gently on the arm of Fanny, while a tear gathered in her eye, and an unwonted colour flooded her cheek.

The heiress of Athelstane evidently struggled for a moment with some strong emotion, and conquered it,—then, turning round, she looked calmly in her young companion's face, saying, "I once had, like other girls, a romantic dream of earthly happiness. Who has not? That was destroyed in a day, and left an aching void, never again to be filled: but life is not given us for selfish regrets. In every event of life we should see a handwriting on the wall that tells us whence it comes, and then who can repine! I often think that there are special agents appointed to watch over every mortal, till we shall each have our share of trials, to throw down every castle of cards with which we would attempt to build for eternity, and we must not, like impatient children, waste our time in useless lamentations."

"No!" said Fanny, in a tone of solemn reflection. "Oh! no; but—

"‘Trust in that veil’d Hand which leads
None by the path that he would go;
And always be for change prepared,
For the world’s law is ebb and flow.’"

"Yes, Fanny," continued Miss Plantagenet, "I no sooner saw clearly what the will of God was, than I felt able to prostrate my own in the dust, able to walk along the road of life contentedly, even though not a flower be left. Perhaps, when my heart was thrown back—as it were, in my face, by Richard Brownlow's desertion,

I did feel inclined for a time to repine, to pass my days in one long lamentation of desolate selfishness, but life was given me for better purposes than to envy others, or to grieve for myself. Certainly many girls have died, and many have wasted their whole existence in a purgatory of disappointed hopes, after such sorrow as mine: but while burying in the earth every wish of my own for this world, some bright flowers have bloomed over the grave of my ruined happiness, when I am myself contributing to the good of others. Many must have suffered more, had I suffered less."

"Observe what a monument of successful benevolence is beside you now!" exclaimed Fanny, clasping Emily's arm with tearful energy; "tell me that it gives you pleasure to have snatched one so helpless, so almost hopeless as myself from utter destruction. Oh, say that you feel in some degree rewarded,—say that you believe in my unspeakable gratitude, and that it gives you hourly pleasure to see me, through your own kindness, as I am!"

"Yes, Fanny; your affection much more than rewards me! I have not one atom of sympathy with the self-pitying, lack-a-daisical sensibility that flutters, weeps, and palpitates over its own trials, working itself into nervous fevers, or perhaps into the grave itself, by wilful indulgence; but I can respect, and I greatly desire to imitate, that healthy grief from which a generous interest springs up

for the good of others. I loved once, and was disappointed. I never can love again as I did—never—yet though my own cherished plan of happiness is not to be, I accept every source of occupation and enjoyment which Providence allows, and I have thus patched up for myself a sort of enjoyment, not so brilliant as my fancy had framed, but, nevertheless, what my conscience can approve. There are persons who prey upon their own feelings, who believe that no one thinks or feels but themselves, and who imagine that all around them have cold, unimpressible hearts of ice, while they alone have sensibility, because it wastes itself on an unreturned attachment; but such idle lamentations do not cure disappointment, nor do any self-punishing austerities. There must be a vigorous warfare against vain regrets. This, Fanny, is my twenty-ninth year, and I dare not tell you how many of these had come and gone before my heart was laid at rest, after the desertion of one whom in my earliest girlhood I had trusted and loved—Richard Brownlow,—

“Then we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted,
To sever for years.

“If I should meet him
After long years,
How should I greet him?
With silence and tears!”

Emily, endeavouring to crush down every appearance of emotion, silently rose, pressing the hand of Fanny as a signal, for her not to follow, and slowly retired to her boudoir, where she remained for a short time in deep meditation over the blasted hopes and confidences of her early youth. Suddenly, however, but resolutely rousing herself from the vain indulgence of such reveries, she proposed to Fanny that they should walk down the village of Athelstane along with Mr. Mortimer, who had arrived on his way to be present at an examination of her school. There they all three proceeded together, while with every advancing step Emily became more cheerful and buoyant, until at length looking placidly round, she listened with interest to Mr. Mortimer, who said, speaking of the uses and pleasures of human existence, "Give me life in earnest—life full of stern duties, deep affections, mighty efforts, successes, and even trials, if they bring out force of character. If sorrow purify the soul, let it come. If suffering exalt my faith, let it be welcome. If death lead to eternal glory, then may I be ready to meet it with joy."

"Yes! that is the state of mind I wish to acquire—but too often wish it in vain," answered Emily, with earnestness. "Let no mortal consider herself to be pitied, while there are others more unhappy, whom she can succour! It is a God-like privilege to do good; and I often observe,

that those, Mr. Mortimer, who are allowed like you to enjoy that greatest felicity, are also tried with more annoyances than others. The very means they attempt for benefitting others become often the actual sources of their torture, probably to test our submission, and to prove whether the good we do is purely from unselfish and pious motives. Philanthropists must be satisfied with the hope of pleasing God; but let them not even reckon on gratitude from those they benefit. It is like a green spot in the desert of existence, Fanny, when I meet with one like yourself, whose good feeling renders each kindness I can show you a mutual pleasure. Every plan of happiness which rests its foundation on this world's affections or enjoyments must fall, like a house on the sand. We can only build and build again, however, while life remains trying every scheme, and constantly failing, till we try the plan of doing all with a single eye to the glory of God, and of receiving thankfully whatever sunshine He sends along the narrow path of duty. Your attachment promises to be the brightest gleam left on mine, Fanny, and I shall bask in it with confidence."

"If I could pluck away all the thorns of life, and bear them for you, how happy that would make me!" exclaimed Fanny, with juvenile enthusiasm. "When I offer up a special prayer for any earthly blessing, it shall be that I, poor, helpless,

and insignificant as I am, may, by some wonderful turn of affairs, be enabled, if it cost me my life, to prove my gratitude, and, like the mouse helping the lion, really to serve you."

"So true an affection is my ample reward, Fanny. It requires a generous nature to receive benefits without actually disliking the bestower, for mere money cannot buy affection, but, on the contrary, alienates it," answered Emily, thoughtfully. "The weight of any great obligation becomes so irksome that, in most cases, people endeavour to throw it off entirely. Then, conscious that they have done wrong, the ungrateful man hates the person injured, and avoids him. Thus clergymen are seldom at ease with the patron who gave them a living; and even if a generous-hearted old relative settle an annuity on some distant cousin, the poor relation turns round on his benefactor very soon, and says it was the very least he could do. Yes, Fanny, I never yet obliged any one, that he did not immediately request me to do something more and more, till he always asks me at last for something far beyond what I can possibly do. Good must be faithfully done by all good men; but it should be on a principle quite independent of gratitude. That when it comes, as in your case, Fanny, is a welcome boon. Till you appeared, every day-dream of my heart had been a day-dream indeed, and I was treading along

my path of duty like a pack horse, without enjoyment; but there are flowers in the thorny hedge now, when I see your smiling face, and hear your pleasant voice. My chief happiness in life must always be what comes reflected from others."

Emily spoke with very solemn emotion, and the elevated calmness of her usual expression became agitated by a momentary breeze of awakened sensibility, disturbed from that serene endurance of life's many disappointments which it had for long years been her endeavour to attain, by a more animated hope of success than she had ever experienced before, in conciliating for herself the affection of a single-minded, trustworthy friend. Dear to Emily's heart by nature was every gentle emotion of tenderness and love; but so often hitherto had she detected self-interest or coldness in those she hoped to attach, that now, with her own intuitive sense of the beautiful and the good, she prized in Fanny's unsophisticated and fervent attachment a newly-found treasure, deeply to be prized, and gladly to be cherished.

"I need some friend who shall belong to me, and I to her," said Emily, one day, when leaning affectionately on the arm of Fanny; "one like yourself, with whom I can read, converse, and walk out, who could comfort me in affliction, be sorry for me when ill, remember me when dead, and shed a tear upon my coffin when it

is closed. Well and most painfully have I known the utter solitude of a heart that has none to love, none by whom to be loved. When the friendships of this world do not disappoint us, they must indeed be its dearest possessions; but I have never yet experienced their perfection. You can and will fulfil my craving to be truly loved, Fanny, and the happiness is mutual. I see no part so difficult to act in life as a single lady's of 'a certain age,' or rather of an uncertain one."

"Especially," observed Fanny, smiling, "if she be a poor relation among many rich connexions."

"Yes," continued Emily; "and being myself now on the very edge of thirty, I am resolving in good time not to be one of those who cannot be young, and will not be old. How I pity Mrs. Drummond Armitage telling to the juvenile world of her own incredulous nephews and nieces histories of her former conquests, while they are all secretly laughing at her poor old face set in a frame of false ringlets, and at the false teeth chattering in her head like castanets."

"I thought you always considered her as being very lively and handsome; she smiling on the world, and the world on her," said Fanny. "And that Mrs. Armitage had inexhaustible spirits, her life surrounded by a sunny zone of perfect felicity."

"My cousin's spirits are very inexhaustible

indeed, if we judge from mere appearances," answered Emily, reflectively. "Hers is a bustling, racketting, pleasure-seeking life; but though my cousin, Mrs. Armitage, is the gayest of the gay, she is far from being the happiest of the happy."

"Not with all the labour she bestows on her own enjoyment?" asked Fanny, with commiseration. "You mentioned that yesterday she remained altogether for fifteen hours in a brilliant circle of society, driving down first at twelve o'clock to the Crystal Palace; walking all day there arm in arm with that lively companion, Lord Tipperary; dining at the public table with fifty intimate friends; coming back to a severe tea at nine; dancing till one, and then having supper, followed by songs till three in the morning. Hers must be good, strong, never-to-be-worn-out animal spirits, that could stand so much wear and tear."

"Mrs. Armitage's Sunday is on much the same pattern of extreme excitement, for there is no day of rest in her year," added Emily. "She is an epicure in sermons, and she drives from chapel to chapel in search of the most brilliant preacher. Her religion is more *Church-ianity* than *Christ-ianity*. Every Sunday she deprives her coachman and horses of their own divinely-appointed leisure, that she may hurry to some far-distant church, where the music and flowers are exhibited in their

greatest perfection. She next fancies duty and pleasure united during the afternoon, by driving to hear the anthem at Westminster Abbey, near which her two idle footmen wait during service in a neighbouring ale-house, and her coachman sleeps on his box. Mrs. Armitage thinks it necessary to keep herself in a perfect mania of constant excitement, flying from house to house, from one acquaintance to another, because she has in fact neither home nor friends in her own house."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Fanny. "If that were true, a beggar might pity her, and I certainly should."

"You may," replied Emily, seriously. "Mrs. Armitage acknowledged to me yesterday that she is wearied of gaiety, indifferent to society, but not fit for loneliness, and unable to gather round her a sociable circle of intimate friends. Mrs. Armitage has not intellect enough to render solitude populous with her own varied thoughts. Those who study the book of her mind would find little to reward the effort, and she says that when totally alone her intellect and heart fall asleep for want of exercise."

"I daresay we might all grow both selfish and dull, if entirely shut up within ourselves, like a snail," answered Fanny. "Then self—self—self would be for ever uppermost, and every trifle belonging to 'number one' would magnify into a

mountain. Society rubs out people's lesser vices and follies; therefore it is not, I believe, when living alone that people grow amiable in disposition or vigorous in intellect."

"Mrs. Armitage's marriage was quite an Auld-Robin-Grey affair; and the husband is dull as an old dormouse," continued Emily. "Poor man! One could really pity him for being such a bore! I remember once having the misfortune to be next him at dinner, and thinking then what a misery it must be for lively sparkling Mrs. Armitage to live as the companion for life of a man so indescribably stupid. To my first question I only received a monosyllable in reply; my next query brought out half a monosyllable; and not receiving any answer whatever to my third, I really looked anxiously round to see if the poor man were dead!"

"My cousin, Captain Clifford, says he believes Mr. Armitage really died the beginning of this season; but that Mrs. Armitage does not allow it to be known yet, as she would be obliged to send so many apologies to pleasant engagements. He used to lounge last year almost constantly at his club, and in that way gentlemen never can be at a loss for society. They can have a party at dinner every day without trouble, as well as a soirée at night; and then they come back wondering that their wives find it dull at home, and

sometimes even censuring their love of gaiety if they go out to tea in the evening !”

“ With a husband very seldom at home, and who seems to be no companion when he is ; with few friends, and those few very far, as London distances generally are, between, I can fancy a sociable person like Mrs. Armitage exceedingly at a loss what to do,” observed Fanny consideringly. “ If your cousin dropped the thread of society she might lose her hold on it for ever ; and even if she has refined taste enough to prefer a quiet circle of pious and literary persons whose conversation might elevate and improve her, how can she find interest to attract them to her home, or fortune to entertain them often ? ”

“ Yes,” added Emily ; “ nothing requires more mind and more income than to have society at its best in London, few in number, early in hours, all intelligent, and all mutually anxious to please. There is no mental exertion in sitting at an opera, or in shaking hands with two hundred acquaintances in a ball-room ; but it is an exercise of the mind, and a very healthy exercise moreover, to sit an hour or two steadily with one intelligent friend. If you mentioned after having been out that you exchanged a word with fifty friends in an evening, I should form a very poor estimate of your enjoyment compared with what I should think had you sat the whole afternoon in dis-

cussion with only one. Acquaintances, if once lost, are not easily picked up in London, where even when sitting in a friend's house before dinner, if you speak to the lady nearest without being formally introduced, she looks as if you must be a swindler," continued Emily, smiling. "Mrs. Armitage, on her husband's account, must almost constantly remain resident in this big world of London, where nothing is more laborious than to keep up a circle of real friendly intimacies. Scarcely any mortal will come a long distance, through endless streets, to spend a quiet evening with a quiet friend. The cost of time and money is too much for friendship; therefore, unless Mrs. Armitage throws herself into the whirl of company and engagements, she tells me that evening after evening she may sit bolt upright in her own drawing-room alone, finding not a soul to converse with, nor a thing to do. She declares that no one can conceive the utter despondency with which she sometimes sees her shutters closed on a winter evening at about four o'clock; hears the distant hum of bustle, gaiety, and business; but has not herself a chance left of meeting any living mortal during about eighteen hours to come. It is not so much the love of gaiety that takes her out as the fear of solitude at home, where no other door opens but what she opens herself, and no step is heard but her own; her eyes are weak, and she

cannot read; her mind his weak, and she cannot think; her nerves are weak, so that she cannot manage her servants; her conversation is at best such mere gossip, and so inferior in the familiar exchange of ideas with most others, that she gives in fact only copper for gold, which few of course like to exchange. Mrs. Armitage has little in her past life to look back upon with pleasure, and nothing in future to anticipate with hope. I do pity her; yet what can that poor woman do, but get rid of time as best she may, and above all get rid of herself?"

"Hers must be a storm-tossed and unenviable life, indeed," observed Fanny reflectively. "And no one with a happy domestic fireside, though ever so humble, need envy her for living in a whirl of splendour. But surely your cousin might find pleasant resources with less feverish artificial excitement. I suppose Mrs. Armitage has, like Sydney Smith, survived the delusion of expecting perfect happiness for a life spent in cultivating primroses and violets, instead of society."

"She has consulted me often in her difficulties, and I feel for them all," replied Emily, meditatively. "Mrs. Armitage once really tried to visit personally among the poor, and to console the afflicted; but the impediments to her efforts would have discouraged a stronger mind. She

lives far from our friend Mr. Mortimer, who might have assisted her, and the sums at her own disposal are not large. Her husband having a small income, and living in the midst of rich relations, expects her to support his position in society by her dress and equipage; therefore her empty-handed sympathy was of little avail with the poor, who became very grasping and discontented under her care. A lady, distinguished-looking as Mrs. Armitage, and dressed in satin or velvet, wandering into the dwellings of indigence, excited only envy and unavailing expectation."

"On all sides her position seems hemmed in by difficulty," observed Fanny. "I believe that few things require more firmness and judgment than to do more good than harm by visiting among the very poor."

"Yes; but it is the most inexhaustible source of happiness on earth, if the mine be well and judiciously worked. Those who do succeed have nothing for which to envy the Mrs. Armitages of gay society, and yet you see now that there is more to be said in excuse for such a life as hers in London, than a mere looker-on who knows only what he sees, could imagine. Her poverty of friends and of home resources, not her will, makes Mrs. Armitage the most pleasure-seeking woman in London."

"I remember her saying yesterday, when calling

here," said Fanny, "what an acquisition she would consider it to have a blind old relation to attend upon, as that would be something to soothe her heart, for she really seems to have a heart with the pleasing sense of usefulness."

"Last season," added Emily; "Mrs. Armitage, in the full career of London festivity, was suddenly taken ill and confined to her room for nine weeks. Never was there a more entire change from the brightest glitter of every London drawing-room to that uncared-for solitude within the curtains of her own bed, with nothing to think of but acute sufferings and their probable termination. The greater people are the more solitary in general when ill. The invalid in a one-roomed hovel, lies surrounded by the bustle, the business, the comings and goings, the washings and cookings of every-day life; but the wealthy sufferer shrinks into a quiet remote apartment, carefully secluded from all disturbance, where his family come, during half-an-hour, on tiptoe to inquire for him, leaving all their occupations and engagements unfulfilled till their visit is over. During the last illness of our late king, William IV., I remember hearing that his own brothers and sisters waited for hours sometimes to ascertain whether he were well enough to receive them, whereas in humble life there is only a curtain between the invalid and all the comers or goers of

the household. Mrs. Armitage told me that for those nine weeks she often felt as solitary during many hours of the night and day, as any prisoner in a condemned cell."

"Then," observed Fanny meditatively, "Mrs. Armitage's life, like a mirror in a drawing-room, seems a mere reflection of circumstances she cannot easily alter. I often think how little many people have a choice in their own position or surroundings, though of course for the good or bad use made of these we are most solemnly answerable. A man does not choose who shall be his parents, nor in what country he shall be born, nor in what period of history. He has no choice in his own early education, any more than in the features of his face, nor in the relations who form his earliest habits and tastes. Whether he shall have health or sickness, wealth or poverty, friends or enemies, long life or early death, are in most cases as inevitably appointed as the position of Mrs. Armitage in the magnificent solitude of her own grand and very dull home. In this world, where we have generally too much or too little of everything, Mrs. Armitage in respect to society can only choose between a surfeit or a famine."

"Yes," answered Emily. "Let her only send apologies for one season to all her invitations, and they will cease entirely, as people are always rather offended at one refusal; but never forgive

two. Mrs. Armitage has sometimes three or four engagements for one evening ; and at other times not one. As she must either obey the invitation of every mere acquaintance, or lose them for ever, she hurries diligently from house to house all night ; sitting in her chariot behind a string of carriages half an hour before arriving at each party. When leaving it, she loses twenty minutes in getting her carriage to escape in, twenty more minutes in the next string of carriages again to reach her second, or third, or fifth *soirée*, and at each she wastes a quarter of an hour in searching for her shawl. In the cloak department at a ball, the game of hide and seek is so fatiguing that the attendants should be made to announce, when they find it, ‘Mrs. Armitage’s cloak stops the way!’ Thus my good cousin, staying only half an-hour at four or five parties, which she takes nearly an hour to reach and half an hour to leave, her time actually enjoyed in the drawing-room scarcely amounts to a shilling in the pound.”

“What a different gift life is to different people ; with some a torrent, and with others a stagnant pool !” observed Fanny. “But how it refreshes one’s mind to think on the smallest cottage of contentment, surrounded with birds and flowers. I do love the rural poor ! Give me a laborious ploughman to benefit, rather than an idle third-rate manufacturer.”

“Yet your bird-and-flower plan may not be one iota more useful, and not half so intellectual as Mrs. Armitage’s. I have no belief in any happiness not united with exertion. Mere retirement, without vigorous self-culture and benevolent enterprises, may be accompanied with as much pride, ignorance, and idleness, as the wildest whirl of dissipation. There may be much more real improvement even in the dullest society than in cultivating a few primroses, or in rhapsodizing over whole acres of dahlias. Pride and indolence quite as often drive people into a rural gardening solitude, as an enlightened love of nature.”

“Yes; the motive for loneliness and the use we make of it must be all in all,” answered Fanny. “But surely nothing can be more conducive to pleasure and improvement than well-chosen society.”

“Especially the intercourse of those most nearly our own cotemporaries,” observed Emily. “Persons much older or much younger, cannot possibly have the same sympathy and oneness of feeling. The aged are, of course, looking back often on scenes we cannot remember, and the young are looking forward to scenes that their elders never can live to behold; but I have often observed how entire is the unity of thought between brothers and sisters, because they have the very same early recollections as well as the same

prospects. At all events, the friction of society exercises our intellects, and most effectually subdues our vanity, for wherever we turn there are those who excel us in something. An invisible hand wisely plucks back our full cup, whenever we hope most to enjoy it; but I often think that my nearest approach to perfect happiness would be, if I could gather round me at Athelstane permanently a circle of well-informed guests. My aim now shall be to do so; and also to raise myself in the scale of intellect by reading up to those of whom my ambition is to make associates and friends."

"What an interesting memoir I read once of your late uncle, the Rev. Ralph Nugent," said Fanny, enthusiastically. "Can there ever have existed on the earth any one so superexcellently, so angelically good, as your much admired and much extolled relative?"

"That biography has only one fault: that it is not in the least degree like the person it pretends to describe," answered Emily, almost laughing. "That sweet interesting volume gives a masterly sketch of a very excellent Christian gentleman; but it is no more like Uncle Ralph himself, than it is like Dr. Chalmers, Mr. Mortimer, the Bishop of Oxford, or any other clergyman."

"No!" exclaimed Fanny, in astonished dismay.

"No! The author of the sketch, who always

speaks of my relative as 'dear Nugent,' never became at all intimate with Uncle Ralph, who was a stiff, dry, pompous man, as inaccessible as Sebastopol, and never allowed anybody to get upon those 'dear Nugent' terms. The panegyric biographer, determined to make him a hero, talks of my uncle's noble aspect; whereas, truth to say, he was hideously ugly; and of his distinguished figure, though he was, in fact, frightfully deformed. There are grand mysterious allusions to Uncle Ralph's extensive liberalities; but I never heard of anything beyond a popularity-penny now and then to a beggar or street-sweeper; and as Mr. Nugent had an income of two thousand a year, during twelve years, out of which he saved twenty thousand pounds, he could not have embarrassed himself much to be charitable. All his accumulations he bequeathed away from those who had been his friends to the Duke of Swindon, a miser richer than himself, and, if possible, more parsimonious."

"Then Mr. Nugent, who is held up as such an exemplary Christian, must have known that his hoards in the Duke's hands would never do a shilling's worth of good."

"Never; but people in making their last wills often act like infidels; doing that which, if there be a God in heaven to judge them, they must for ever and ever repent," answered Miss Plantagenet.

“Even Christians, who have a grain of malice, hatred, envy, or revenge lurking in their hearts, too often vent it in the explosion of their last will, spreading discord and misery among all their nearest relatives. As for his humility, my Uncle Nugent did not think above six people in the world good enough for him to associate with. He was as exclusive on the score of his own superior piety as the Duke of Swindon on the score of his superior rank. That book about my uncle is no more true than a fairy tale.”

“Then,” said Fanny, in a tone of extreme disappointment, “he was a mere average man, after all, no more supernatural than you or me!”

“Speak for yourself, Mrs. Fanny. I mean to start myself off in a splendid autobiography some day, upon the most approved modern system, and then you shall see what you shall see. I must write letters to you, on purpose for publication, keeping up in my own name the character of all that is great or good in human nature, and filled as full as they can hold of clap-trap sentiments. Biographies now are so completely made up from a preconcerted plot, or from a fertile imagination, that they remind me often of the perplexity in which I once found perhaps the most distinguished artist of his time. He was requested to paint the full-length portrait of a deceased old miser who had endowed an hospital with five hundred thousand

pounds. All the idea that could be obtained of the founder's appearance was exhibited in a faint pencil-sketch, merely representing a face such as any child might have drawn, with two dots for the eyes and a stroke for the mouth. From this he painted features, figure, complexion, coat, waistcoat, boots, an imaginary arm-chair, and a suppositious newspaper. It is a very fine, clever, full-length portrait of an old gentleman, as like anybody in the world as the supposed original, and such are modern memoirs, or even autobiographies. Nobody likes making his exit from life with merely, in a newspaper paragraph, 'much and justly regretted!' tacked to his name; or, perhaps, the less flattering notice, 'Friends will please accept this intimation;' but every mortal now seeks for immortality at the ink-bottle's mouth, and keeps a diary for no eye but his own, to be published by a treacherous executor after his death, and they are all so much alike, that you might bind a dozen mixed up in alternate pages together, without ever perceiving any difference of style or ideas."

CHAPTER V.

“As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
So year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.”

TENNYSON.

“THERESA,” said Sir Richard, the next time they met in the drawing-room alone, “you are the one little mortal on earth with whom no one can be angry! I am not sure, however, that my recent lecture on the duty and necessity of being happy has yet made a convert of my favourite niece. Has it?”

“Oh yes, Sir Richard: yes!” answered Theresa, attempting a tone of vivacity, to conceal the most unconquerable sadness. “If I had all the arranging of this vexatious world, every mortal should, in accordance with your wishes, enjoy perfect felicity,—you particularly! Oh that I could myself merit half the happiness you desire for me; but can there exist happiness—ought there to exist any—with ceaseless remorse? I have been led on beyond the power of resistance! One

ought in preference to be burned at the stake; many have been, rather than yield to a wrong request; but I was terrified into compliance. To escape from the evil brought upon me by consenting, I could give the whole world, but in vain."

"Theresa! I would give two or three worlds to help you, but it appears in vain also; therefore let us forget what we cannot remedy. When I hear your voice it brings back to my heart, as in a flood of light, remembrances, affections, and thoughts belonging to long—long ago, which I have endeavoured to banish for ever," said Sir Richard, his voice instinct with restrained emotion. "Each scene around me, within or without this house, brings back the careless hours of my childhood, the day-dreams of my youth. They all speak of parents long sleeping in the dust, of a brother murdered in his prime, of friends become strangers, of love extinguished by treachery, and the sad remembrance how once I hoped to be happy. Life has been a dark stream to me, and grows darker as I advance. Still you and I have both a mixture of mirth and melancholy in our nature yet, that will make us very good companions during a walk. Come, Theresa, are you for a long stride in the twilight, with an old uncle?"

"Is any one in his senses going out to walk in

a damp evening like this?" shrieked Anne, affectedly, "I would not go a step for fifty pounds a minute!"

"Then, luckily, you are not asked; but to be in the open air is the only thing I consider life," said Sir Richard, smiling, as they emerged into the evening sunshine. "It would be ingratitude to Providence not to feel happy on so fine a day; and there is one spot very dear to my memory, Theresa, which I wish to visit,—a place by the river side consecrated in my tenderest recollections. I once thought to go there alone; but if a young niece will give her sympathy to an elderly uncle, above thirty years old, in remembering the heart-aches of his boyhood, it may soothe my heart to talk of old times and old feelings with my brother's child, beside the ancient bridge where I used to meet Emily.

'Here ev'ry leaf I look upon forbids me to forget.'

"Gladly, and oh how deeply, would I enter there into all you can, say," exclaimed Theresa, clasping Sir Richard's offered hand, with starting tears in her eyes of unmistakeable sincerity. "My life will one day perhaps be a desert waste, with no one from whom to claim any sympathy. Accept mine in its utmost warmth from me now and for ever! Believe that whatever happens, I am truly—oh, how truly grateful—thankful to you with

all my heart, though, alas! little deserving your kindness."

"Well, my dear niece, since it suits your whim, we shall suppose you quite unworthy, and every way undeserving of my affection; yet still, *anon*, Theresa, and nevertheless, it is my unaccountable whim to like you, and to feel anxious that my niece be happy," replied Sir Richard, kindly. "The greatest service you can do the best of uncles is, to attach yourself to him as fast as possible, and I shall do all in my power to make that easy."

Theresa looked up with an expression of ingenuous gratitude in her eyes, but they fell to the ground again, and her face became drenched in scarlet, when Sir Richard warmly added, "Let my brother Frank's child, my own dear niece, confide always and entirely in me, as I do in her."

Theresa's voice, when attempting to answer, was completely gone. She felt now like the unfortunate fiddler at a fair, who, when wishing to strike up a solo, discovered that his bow had been soaped. Not a sound could she utter, and her confusion became only increased, when Sir Richard added, in a tone of kind familiarity, "Tell me all about yourself. Tell me, for instance, how my brother Dan, as a guardian, treats his ward. Is your girlish allowance quite ample

for all girlish purposes? What income does Daniel, in his liberality, give the young heiress now? You stammer and hesitate as if I had taken an unwarrantable liberty in asking, Theresa; but surely that need be no secret from Uncle Richard?"

"Certainly not," answered Theresa, nervously rolling and unrolling a green leaf she carried in her hand; "but—but, I have no allowance."

"None! Then of course you receive abundance of pocket-money. Let an old uncle ask a plain question: what does my niece possess at this moment? Now indulge my impertinent curiosity by telling me the truth, the whole truth, and, as the saying is, nothing but the truth. One hundred pounds? two? fifty? or ten?"

Sir Richard, during this Dutch auction, turned laughingly to Theresa, and was surprised at the extreme embarrassment of her whole expression. Her eye could not meet his, and her colour deepened every instant, till at length he said, after a moment's good-humoured reflection,—

"There is nothing to be so very much ashamed of, Theresa, if you have a little exceeded the income, probably much too small, which Daniel awards to the heiress of Torchester. Tell me now, what has been your weak side? what have been your little missyish extravagances? I do like girls to be girls. Have you squandered on china, perfumes, bijouterie—bigotry or virtue?"

“None! I have spent nothing——I——I——”

“Come! there must be some outlet for your expenditure. Mine is a fairy purse, as the more it spends, the more it contains. Suppose, therefore, if you have run out,—if all your evident unhappiness proceed from my darling niece being in debt,—that I lend her on good security——”

“I have no security to offer, none!” interrupted Theresa, making a very unsuccessful attempt at a smile; “not a shilling in the world is at this moment mine.”

“That is, of course, a *façon de parler*. You should always carry some loose silver about with you, Theresa, always! There are constant opportunities of being liberal to the poor. I like to see heart and hand go together in assisting them, in assisting every one who needs or claims our aid——”

“There are some sorrows beyond all human assistance—beyond the reach of even your compassion, for they do not deserve it,” said Theresa, in a low, hurried voice, which became hoarse from increasing emotion. “Could you fancy, Sir Richard, a young girl, for instance, carefully educated in religious principle, suddenly plunged by her own guardian into utter beggary? Could you conceive her surrounded by scenes of anguish and suffering among those she loves best, which it

harrows the very soul to witness? Can you suppose that miserable girl offered what would save all her dearest friends from starving, if she will but personate another for some days? Can you fancy her not being told half the mischief intended by this deceit till too late to retract? Can you think of her guardian goading her on by threatening that he will instantly put an end to himself unless she swear a solemn oath not to reveal the truth? Oh, Sir Richard, I have known such a case! May God forgive that wretched girl! Could you?"

"I could—even if she injured me," replied Sir Richard, with a penetrating look at the trembling Theresa. "Take me to her instantly, and you shall see how I can succour, how I could pardon her."

"But, Sir Richard, what ought she to do? Unhappy girl! shall she, by confessing all, throw herself and her sister into the grasp of a Popish priest, their cruel, persevering, treacherous enemy? Shall she drive her guardian into suicide, and his wife, her best friend, into heart-broken shame and perpetual beggary, or shall she continue to act a lie which her very soul abhors—which is more utterly loathsome to her every day, every hour, every moment—which hereafter she is determined, as soon as she can do so without all these disastrous consequences, to reveal?"

“Is there no mortal she can trust?” asked Sir Richard, kindly; “no one so generous and compassionate that he would be sure, *coute qui coute*, to befriend her in the path of difficulty and of virtue. Could she not trust me?”

“But, Sir Richard, an oath is on her conscience, awful and solemn.”

“Then,” replied he, fixing on Theresa one of those penetrating looks which it seemed as if nothing could escape; “give me time, and make your mind easy. I used to be no fool at an enigma, and may, perhaps, myself unravel the mystery. I had plenty of practice from Daniel formerly, and always then preferred discovering the conundrum myself to being told it. I hunted down all his unfathomable secrets in my boyhood, without ever having to draw off my forces defeated in the siege. My brother may be trying some of his old tricks on a larger scale now! Do not vex yourself, Theresa. Whatever is awry in this little Torchester world of ours, I shall discover, arrange, and——forgive.”

Theresa’s flashing eye glanced up at Sir Richard for one moment with a look of intelligent gratitude which he never afterwards forgot, and in a singularly low, distinct, articulate voice she said, “It is a weight of despair off my heart to hear you say so! I feel hemmed in on every side, and as if whatever I do were wrong. A frightful secret

has been imposed upon me. It is more than half betrayed now, when I acknowledge that there is one. Oh, Sir Richard! if life or death were at stake I could trust you myself, but far more than these is involved. I feel myself almost deranged under the burden of doing wrong, and if all became known, there is but one being on the earth who would try to find an excuse for me—the man whom it is my misfortune to injure! I discovered only now, only too late what was the full intention of their conspiracy; and I am resolved it shall not be ultimately successful, though the courage is not yet mine to face all the frightful evils awaiting myself and others, which must spring up when I denounce the truth. A cell in a convent for myself, till I am of age, and probably the death of my guardian——”

“No fear of Daniel! You are raving now, my dear niece,” interrupted Sir Richard, alarmed at Theresa’s increasing velocity of speech and agitation of countenance. “Do not anticipate impossible evils, but adopt for your motto now ‘Begone, dull care!’ Depend upon my turning up the trump card soon. Mr. Attorney Brownlow has always been a mere human mongrel, skulking along the bye-paths of human life, and I shall throw the lantern of discovery over his most secret schemes. He always hated truth, and if he could by any jugglery persuade me that there are more than

three sides to a triangle, he would mislead my unsophisticated mind on the subject, if possible, or assure me that two and two make five."

"While mingling truth with falsehood, sneers with smiles,
A thread of candour with a web of wiles ;
A plain, blunt show of briefly-spoken seeming,
To hide his bloodless heart's soul-harden'd scheming.

"A lip of lies, a face form'd to conceal,
And, without feeling, mock at all who feel.
Look on the picture ! deem it not o'ercharged,
There is no trait which might not be enlarged."

BYRON.

CHAPTER VI.

“J’aime assez mon amant pour renoncer à lui.”

BAJAZET.

UNDER the same roof in a country house, how incessantly are there opportunities for familiar intercourse compared with the few-and-far-between meetings of even the most intimate friends in town. Lord Brentford, who never let an hour escape without considering how to make the most of life in gaining as much enjoyment as he could, now looking into his own heart, became conscious that no mortal's presence gave him so much delight as Theresa's, and that when she vanished the blank became irreparable. Every conversation seemed to him mere frivolous, vapid, small talk, without life or spirit, except hers; and after having admired her in Ireland for what she appeared to be, he now loved her for what she really was. Each tone of his voice might have betrayed from henceforth the deep interest with which he spoke to her on even the most accidental subjects; and he contrived by constant watchfulness, and by a thousand ingenious devices, to meet Theresa

constantly, whether she would or no, to walk with her, to read with her, to draw with her, while his admiration increased every hour, as her character and feelings became more developed under his observation.

During their first acquaintance in Ireland, Theresa's youthful features seemed made for mirth and vivacity ; but now, while Lord Brentford stealthily contemplated her more serious expression, there seemed a deeper charm than ever in her aspect, a more irresistible allurements in her voice, and a more bewitching attraction in all she said. A thousand lives, he thought, might be pleasantly spent with one so every way interesting, and no hope could ever be so full of hope as to secure the affections of one he considered so very nearly perfect,—so more than perfect,—as Theresa, and to pass a long life in the enjoyment of her society, in trying so to girdle her future life round with incessant tenderness, that not a sorrow should so much as approach her. It became more and more apparent to Lord Brentford, as he watched Theresa, that her eye was troubled ; that her voice, when she spoke, deepened with agitation, and that her cheek varied from red to pale, from pale to red, giving every evidence of an aching heart. For the first time Lord Brentford knew the power of a real attachment, totally disinterested, too ; for he lamented even

the brilliant prospects of Theresa as heiress of Torchester, because that succession in view might detract something from the gracefulness of his declaration, when he acknowledged to her his attachment. It took something, perhaps, also from his hope of success; yet, if he attempted to struggle against his increasing preference, it grew only the deeper and the more riveted.

When seated that evening beside Theresa, affecting as much indifference as he could assume, Lord Brentford wished to have thrown himself at her feet, and wished that he might have professed his intention to live or die devoted to her, and to her only. All that makes this life worth possessing seemed to Lord Brentford comprised in the one hope of gaining Theresa's affection. Nevertheless, he scarcely dared, even in his most secret mind, to acknowledge the full extent of his love; afraid by an unguarded look to risk that share of happiness which had now fallen to his fortunate lot. Meanwhile he greatly enjoyed the pleasant familiarity of daily country-house intercourse at Torchester; hearing all that Theresa said to others, as well as to himself, and watching every change in her attitude or expression. She was drawing in the afternoon beside a gothic window; the summer breeze now stealing gently in, played over her blooming cheek and blew one of Theresa's dark ringlets far out behind;

Lord Brentford wished he had been provided with scissors to amputate it clandestinely ; and as he watched the progress of her painting, a slight tremulousness in Theresa's pencil alone betrayed her consciousness of his presence ; till, at length, she turned suddenly round, with a look of unaffected surprise, saying—

“ Lord Brentford ! How very idle you are ; I thought you had been reading ! ”

“ So I am ; and what interests me above every other subject on earth,” he replied, with a conscious smile, “ I am reading your thoughts. I was trying, at least, to read why you are in some respects so changed since we met in Ireland—since we rallied and laughed together on the merry shores of Loch Elan. Tell one who loves you truly, why your cheek has become paler, with more of the York than of the Lancaster rose in it now, though equally, or even more beautiful than before ; but why is your look so sad of late, your manner so agitated, your step so listless and without hope ? We are told of happiness being a flower so very fleeting that it is well to snatch every blossom before it fades ; therefore, is not this moment, when we are together, too precious to fling away ? Say what you think.”

“ Most people offer the small and vulgar sum of a penny for one's thoughts, but mine, it appears are not worth so much ! ” answered Theresa, quietly

resuming her pencil, with a smile ; but a tear also glittered down her cheek. " You must not be allowed to steal them."

" I wish to steal a place in them—a very favourable place," replied he, in an insinuating tone. " If I were bent upon stealing, here is abundant temptation. This long curl, this beautiful lock of hair, is a lock without any key; that shining ringlet would be worth more than its weight in gold to me."

" Your complimentary sentence on the subject of hair is borrowed from Pope. I remember it perfectly in his ninth or eleventh volume ! These speeches to-day are quite in the extinct pre-Raphaelite school ; but pray come down from your stilts for half an hour and be rational," said Theresa, in a tone of pretty caprice, a whole summer of roses glowing on her cheek, and a smile sparkling in her superb eyes. " I remember Lady Dora Fitzalan showing me a book once, belonging to the officer she afterwards married. It contained about ninety locks of hair, all fastened into as many pages, on which were inscribed the names, histories, and recommendations of all those young ladies on whose beautiful heads they originally grew. If you keep such a book, Lord Brentford, perhaps my stray ringlet may be a candidate for the 65th page ; but you must wait till it becomes grey."

“By all means; for, at your advanced age, that cannot be long! Now try that smile again upon your worst enemy, and it will conquer him! I mean instantly, however, to set an example of generosity, for you actually may have my favourite curl now!”

“Thank you,” replied Theresa, with an ill-concealed blush, “but my book of ringlets is not yet begun.”

“When it is, let me also furnish you with my own very romantic history, which shall be as truthful as most autobiographies in modern times. You must then favour me with your authentic life and adventures; telling, as usual, at what age precisely you learned to read, and what a marvellous child you were considered by a whole circle of idolizing aunts and uncles, parents and guardians,” answered Lord Brentford, in a rallying tone; but he was amazed, even startled, to observe the sorrowful expression which at the mention of relatives and guardians suddenly overclouded Theresa’s averted countenance. The drawing before her eyes had now become enveloped in mist, while starting tears almost blinded her, as Lord Brentford continued, his dark eyes earnestly fixed on Theresa, as if desirous of penetrating into her very soul. “I shall recount on the spot my own short but truthful biography. It includes the description of one young lady, the fairest of

the fair, whom all must admire, and many may love, but whom none can admire and love as I do. Pardon me, if my feelings now rush too abruptly into words, dearest Theresa, but the impulse is irresistible, for I do not speak the mere common language of common compliment. I would do anything on earth, but what is dishonourable, to gain from you one inch of return for my whole heart long ago bestowed on you, and which will be yours entirely till all the elements fall asunder. You surely know, you cannot need to be told, that for you only I desire to live, or could even consent to die. Now let me seriously entreat you at least to imitate the young lady in the nursery-game, who says, 'I love my love, because I know my love loves me.' It will be very ungrateful if you do not."

"Lord Brentford!" said Theresa, in a tone of sorrowful emotion. A long pause ensued; the pencil dropped from her hand, and she burst into tears. With an effort the weeping girl at length composed herself sufficiently to add, "We never—never can be more to each other than we are—never! I understood you were engaged to another!"

"But," said Lord Brentford, gaining encouragement from her evident emotion, and from the inextinguishable sensibility of Theresa's voice, "I have a perfect castle in the air of future happiness with you, adding pillar to pillar every day, and

cannot see it destroyed. I am the most positive of men, and must obstinately hope on, even though you seem at this moment intending to be most unaccountably implacable, most cruelly cruel."

"Not cruel, but kind, in warning you at once that there is an impediment — oh, how insurmountable! If I told what that is, you would at once, for ever, and most gladly consent never to see me again."

"Impossible! there can be no such thing on the cards; nothing that can make me willing to resign Theresa, unless she gives herself to another. *Les beaux yeux sont ceux qui me regarde le plus favorablement*, yet surely you do not suppose I ever saw, or can see, your equal on earth!"

"Do not say so! Do not think so! Let me forget all you have said now!" exclaimed Theresa, in unfeigned distress, and hastily rising to withdraw, while the flowers she had held fell scattered at her feet, and Lord Brentford picked up one rose, which he kept for ever afterwards. "All you say only embitters my sorrow that we must part — that we must part for ever and ever!"

"Impossible! quite impossible!" replied Lord Brentford, starting, and becoming pale with agitation. "You cannot mean it. You cannot be so heartlessly indifferent to me, so careless of my unbounded attachment."

“Not so, certainly—not as indifferent as I should be—not so indifferent as you will yourself become when you hear all. I cannot but grieve in agony to know how very soon your attachment will be extinguished—must be, and ought to be,” replied Theresa, in a tone of the deepest despondency. “Is it possible I should not feel pleased that for a short moment you have loved me? because, Lord Brentford, you shall be hereafter the one only attachment of my heart upon earth. Yet, believe me, there is a moral wall of separation between us never to be surmounted. I never, never, never can be yours—never!”

“Do not destroy the only hope of real happiness I ever indulged,” said Lord Brentford, earnestly. “I utterly loathe and abhor the life of idle, useless amusement that has hitherto been my nearest approach to enjoyment. If you require reformation and steadiness, no rock shall be half so steady as I. For pity’s sake, do not ask more! For my sake, for your own sake, for everybody’s sake, take me as I am! You never shall, for one moment of your after life, regret it. We may give up the world together, but I cannot give up hope. It is the one star in my sky. Suppose you try me with an engagement for one year. At least you cannot prevent my waiting as long for your consent. You surely know already all that

I am eager to express; and you must not insult my love by a single doubt of its lasting for life. Already, you know, it is quite a respectable old attachment of several months' duration; therefore why lead me on to dash all my hopes in the dust? Who said I was engaged, and to whom?"

"Hear me now, and believe that you never can blame the miserable Theresa as much as she blames herself. All hope is vain. If we loved each other entirely and for ever, it is in vain," said Theresa, with a look and voice of sorrowful despondency. "Nothing that can be imagined is more impossible than that we should ever become more to each other than we are. All that relates to me is a blunder, a mystery, an imposition! Oh that the earth had swallowed me up before I became what I am!"

Theresa leaned back in her chair, gazing absently at the distant landscape, but seeing it not. Her dark eyes looked unnaturally large, with a fixed expression of deep anxiety, as if haunted by the constant intrusion of some painful thought. That mournful silence Lord Brentford would not receive as an answer, for it gave no consent; therefore he exclaimed, with anxious impatience, "Tell me all! explain yourself! Do you think I am made of marble, to endure this? that my hopes can all be turned to icicles, and I not insist on knowing why? It was perhaps too

much to hope that such true love as mine should go smoothly for ever ; but give me some prospect, however distant, of success. Love such as mine must be repaid in its own coin ; therefore you shall not be able to say, ‘ No.’ Let us advance through life hereafter as we have gone through the last hour, alone together. I love you, Theresa, as no one ever loved before. To me the world has but two divisions—where you are, and where you are not. Yes ; your presence is my brightest sunshine, your voice my sweetest music, your step my most welcome sound. Surely, then, you are not displeased at my telling you so ! I could enjoy any struggle in life, if it end favourably ; therefore if there be a hard knot in the thread of our attachment, why break it altogether ? With the great aim before me of gaining your affection, I shall force love and fortune, at last, into being kind.”

“ Alas ! all poetry is filled with the sorrows of love,” said Theresa, despondingly ; “ but there is scarcely a line for its joys,—

“ ‘Tis Love that leaves where'er he lights
A burned or broken heart behind.’ ”

Theresa leaned far out of the window as she spoke these words almost inaudibly, and her heart was torn with conflicting sensations. The words of Lord Brentford might, under happier circum-

stances, have conveyed to her unsophisticated heart all that she could imagine of earthly happiness, but now they sounded in her ear as a death-knell of anguish and self-reproach. He seemed to Theresa's young mind the man of all others the most fascinating, the most unchangeably to be loved, as he stood before her now ; a glowing smile of inextinguishable hope in his animated countenance, while the utterance of the heart flowed in a stream of eloquence from his lips.

Theresa, while he spoke, riveted her hands over her forehead. Her cheeks seemed now, in their deepening colour, as if they would take fire, while for some moments agitation rendered her perfectly wordless ; and, bending her head down almost to her knees in shame and sorrow, she at length burst into an agony of tears, and sobbed convulsively, saying, "I deserve to be miserable, and I am."

"Not if you love me ; for I promise to make you perfectly happy ; to bring a smile from you for every tear you ever shed ; to be for life your slave, your servant, your admirer, your friend, brother, counsellor, and husband," said Lord Brentford, in a tone of manly, unaffected sensibility, rather encouraged, perhaps, than otherwise by Theresa's extreme emotion. "I have longed, yet dreaded, to tell you all my feelings, but now they can no longer be repressed. If I live a

thousand years, the whole of that time shall be devoted to watching over your happiness; to thinking of you and acting for you. Ask more, and it shall be done. No barrier can come between us, unless you dislike me."

Sadly—oh, how sadly!—did Theresa know that for her there was no such hope; and with a low sigh of utter and intolerable misery she buried her face on the arm of the sofa. Lord Brentford, however, had caught one glimpse of her face, crimson with agitation; and again feeling reassured, he grasped her small delicate hand in his own, saying, in accents of increasing animation, "You are the most fascinating, but the most unaccountable of human beings. It has seemed to me quite an enchanting dream, from which I feared to awake, that we are at length under the same roof. Last month I destroyed fifty pen-knives, at least, in cutting your name on all my trees. Everywhere I look, in sky, earth, or sea, I read the name of Theresa!"

"Stop! Lord Brentford. Say no more; and oh, recal every word you have spoken!" exclaimed Theresa, sorrowfully. "My heart may die in the effort, but I must give you up."

"No! Give me but a return of half the love I feel for you, and this will be to me the most extatic moment that a human heart can know. Why do you shake that small discouraging head

so ominously? You look like the last note in my favourite air of ‘Blow, gentle gales’—‘deep as our despair.’ For your sake I could be avaricious of happiness, and offer you all I possess, keeping none for myself but the consciousness that you are mine. How I shall delight in proving that I know your value, and in telling you every hour, every moment, of my devoted attachment! That seems but a feeble word to express what I feel. A heart of stone could not but love you—how much more mine! We must spend the happy years of a long life together, and day after day my mind will scarcely seem large enough to contain so much felicity.”

“It can never, never be!” exclaimed Theresa, crushing her hands convulsively together, and speaking in a low, desponding, almost inaudible voice, which startled Lord Brentford with a sudden apprehension of he knew not what. Theresa then slowly stood up, at the full height of her beautiful figure; her cheek scarlet, her lip quivering, and her eyes glittering with unshed tears. There was a look of solemn, serious grief in her whole aspect which impressed on Lord Brentford an instant conviction of its depth and reality; but still he could not condemn himself to the torture of doubting that all might yet be as he wished and hoped. A pause ensued—a long pause of suspense on his part, of utter misery on

Theresa's; and her voice was low, but mournfully impressive, when she spoke again, saying, "Believe me, Lord Brentford, I am wholly and entirely unworthy of your attachment. Believe that."

"If I can; but one need not attempt impossibilities," replied Lord Brentford, in accents of restored cheerfulness. "If that be all the impediment, leave me to judge. To tell you the truth, I have a foolish detestation of any one who is perfect; and I should like you ten thousand times the better for having a few faults, if you can possess any; but you certainly show none. Mine, however, are quite enough for two. If you have any blemishes, I like them better than other people's perfections. A joke is a joke, and may be laughed at as a joke; but for you to talk seriously of having a shadow of demerit is amusing. I am rather afraid of passing myself off upon you for more than I am worth; but my faults are like yours, mere straws on the surface, and our many virtues are the pearls concealed below. Make me, then, the happiest, as I shall be the most grateful, of men, by allowing me to live for you, with you, and never, while life remains, to leave you. Thus love and duty might be delightfully united in all my future existence; but do not delay your promise. Remember that an unwilling favour is no favour, and I am very impatient to secure your

pledge. It is said that frequently people grant favours because they become tired of refusing; therefore let me endeavour to tire you out by my perseverance. If, at the peril of life and limb, I can surmount all the invisible obstacles you threaten, tell me what they are, and it is done. In such a cause, danger would be dearer to me than safety. Appoint me, then, any task within the power of possibility to perform; but name also the period when I may hope to succeed. If years must first elapse, still say when those years shall be ended; and I can live on—live, counting my hours of probation till we can be happy.”

Lord Brentford's words rushed in a torrent of irresistible emotion, burning from the heart, while in his look there was all the eloquence of intense feeling; but, to his surprise and great discouragement, Theresa seemed only more miserable, and more intent on escaping from the room. His last words had scarcely rung upon her ear, before, pale as death and with an exclamation of unmis-takeable anguish, she said, in accents of hopeless despondency, and of almost fierce self-reproach, “My punishment is greater than I can bear, yet I deserve that, and ten thousand times more. Yes, Lord Brentford, mine should be, and must be, the iron scourge of a ceaseless remorse. You must teach yourself to hate me.”

“Impossible!—utterly impossible! Surely, my

attachment cannot be a crime, that it is so punished! Think what you do in breaking up the whole hopes of my life on the very threshold. Think how much heartfelt love you are crushing and destroying. You may render it hopeless, but you cannot make it change. Pause and consider well, therefore, before you throw away a heart so unalterably devoted. Tell me, is it that you love another, or that you hate me?"

"Neither!—oh, neither!" exclaimed Theresa, with almost passionate energy, and covering her face, to hide in part the agony of her spirit. "Think of me only as a sister, or—must I say it—as a stranger. My very heart seems dead now. To have such a secret as mine, is to despair of all future peace and happiness. Why can I not better disguise my misery? but all control over my feelings seems gone from me, now and for ever. You will one day thank me, Lord Brentford, for telling you that now we must part for ever and ever. Yes! yes! wrench me out of your memory now. To me there remains only one long agony of remorse, to last for life. In that hopeless endurance there will not even remain the one gleam of comfort that might have been mine, had I acted right. Oh! to think that you—even you, Lord Brentford—must learn hereafter to despise me!"

With a low sigh of dead and desolate misery,

Theresa turned to go. She looked the very image of despondency, yet resolute as adamant, though the echo of her own mournful words was yet ringing painfully on her almost bursting heart. As she reached the door, Lord Brentford once more intercepted her, saying, "Leave me not, Theresa, in this misery, without an answer—without a hope!"

"I dare give you no hope—I must give you but one answer; yet, as we shall never meet again, Lord Brentford, it consoles me to tell you—it may console you to know—that, as a sincere attachment is the best treasure this world can offer, yours would have been very dear and precious to me—yours would have been all in life that I could have prized and cherished; but a gulf is between us, that nothing on earth can ever remove."

"What does this mean?" asked he, in a voice that sounded almost stern, from the excess of his agitation. "If you can love me, dear Theresa, surely all is well—it must and shall be well! Since we cannot help caring for each other, it had better be together for life, than separated. Take me, then, for better, and I must take you for worse. We shall exchange our affections then, adorned with all the purest feelings of a first and only attachment. Our mutual confidence shall shed its brightest sunshine over many a future

day. Why not, Theresa?—why turn away with a look that seems to destroy all hope?”

“Lord Brentford, you may see in a degree the utter anguish of my spirit; but you cannot—no, you cannot see one hundredth part of what I suffer in making you unhappy, or in lowering myself in your estimation. But the sacrifice of your esteem is forced upon me by principle, by friendship, even by attachment itself. I would rather die than tell you so, but I am not what I seem—I am a mere impostor!”

“This is delusion and monomania!” exclaimed Lord Brentford, attempting to assume a tone of jesting satire. “You must be shut up as a maniac! I shall soon be one myself! Without you, Theresa, my heart will feed upon its own misery till it be destroyed. All this time, if I am not cruelly mistaken, you rather like me than otherwise. Why not, then, as I offer in the handsomest manner to put up with those frightful faults and demerits of which you accuse yourself, consent to become the pest and torment of my life, as I shall be of yours? I have rather a fancy for modest merit; so let us try to endure each other. You cannot but love me, when I promise to render you the happiest as well as the most beloved of mortals. Tell me frankly, now, what is the hideous bugbear that stands in our way. Have you taken the veil?”

“No, Lord Brentford; but I have a veil to remove—a very black veil. Before many days you must know all. Nothing shall delay my confession to Sir Richard and to yourself,” said Theresa, in a low, almost inaudible whisper, while a deep sob accompanied the effort to speak, and her colour became gradually crimson as the inmost leaf of a rosebud. “Remember, when you know all, how fearfully I was driven on by others, and pity while you blame me.”

“Nothing can shake my belief in your excellence. I have a very robust faith in that; why then banish me from your presence without any more distinct explanation?” answered Lord Brentford, the ardour of whose feelings gave at this moment an expressive dignity to his whole aspect, as he added in a tone of strong determination, “If I remain standing here till midnight, Theresa, I will and shall know the truth. Tell me then the very worst. If our attachment be mutual, I can scarcely imagine any bolts or bars that could keep us asunder. Whatever be the direful mystery with which you threaten me, I could better bear to hear it from your own lips now than from any other. Give me then an explanation.”

“I could not give it now and live!” exclaimed Theresa, with all the passionate energy of despair. “Leave me, oh, leave me!”

“Surely not before I know why we are both to

be made miserable for life. Both, Theresa, for I know and believe that you love me.”

She bent her head, while her face, which appeared to Lord Brentford, a perfect world's wonder of girlish, youthful loveliness, glowed with the deepest scarlet; by slow degrees then every tinge of colour became drained from her lips and cheek, till Theresa's beauty became like the beauty of death, while he hurriedly added, “I love you too deeply and too truly ever to give you up, Theresa. Let me implore you at least to make your refusal less decided. The utmost agony of suspense would be preferable to hopeless despair! Only tell me that you will re-consider,—tell me anything rather than that I must live out my days alone and without consolation.”

“I must not—dare not give a hope to myself or you,” answered Theresa in a low whisper, and raising her large mournful eyes to his with an expression so deprecating, yet so utterly hopeless, that Lord Brentford started anew; for the first time he became fully impressed with the apprehension that this might indeed prove a final separation, and grasping her hand, he exclaimed in a tone of passionate agony, “May you never live to experience as painfully as I do now the extinction of every cherished hope! To you I cannot speak the language of ordinary love. To you I have never used words without meaning, for I did most

truly desire and intend to live fulfilling your wishes; forgetting my own, caring only to exist for you, and offering you the daily, hourly homage of an attachment so entire as to be in truth worthy of you. Never was any one more truly loved; and it can be nothing new to you to know this. I would have welcomed any chain that could bind me heart and soul to you; but if that must not be, then observe what I say. Under every circumstance of life, the only impossibility is that my love should change, or that I should ever believe one syllable against you. Though separated for years, Theresa, though all things should seem as you so strangely appear to expect against you, still believe that even then, my long-baffled affection shall continue deeply and passionately devoted to you till death—to you only, Theresa! You may perhaps seek to be happy yet in forgetfulness, but I never can.”

Theresa's look was one of unutterable sadness, when slowly, and with a step noiseless and mournful as that of an apparition from the other world, she passed out of the room.

Lord Brentford stood nearly petrified with sorrow and astonishment, for there was a fearful reality not to be mistaken in that look of death-like grief. The last glimpse he caught of Theresa's almost childlike face, it resembled that of a beautiful corpse. It was impossible for Lord Brentford

longer to doubt, not only that she loved him, but also that she had bid him a final farewell. Lord Brentford paused for several minutes immovable, while his mind became irresistibly tossed in a storm of dark apprehensions, succeeded by still obstinately surviving hopes. He seemēd scarcely to have felt how unutterably dear Theresa was to him till now, when they were parted for ever.

It could not be that an unsophisticated girl, so full of youthful naiveté and cheerful good-humour, could ever herself have committed any action very seriously to be blamed, thought the much-enamoured Lord Brentford, who easily convinced himself that Theresa had taken an exaggerated view of some difficulty into which the faults of others had plunged her. Now that Theresa's very startling agitation appeared no longer visibly before his eyes, Lord Brentford's doubts, fears, and distress all vanished in the sunshine of his own hopeful nature, and during that night, while he slept little and thought much, the young peer set aside resolutely all fears and cherished every hope, till he felt at last assured that all must yet go right. Lord Brentford had not courage to face any other possibility. Tired of empty flippancy and frivolity in many other girls, Lord Brentford had the good taste exquisitely to appreciate the fresh, young, sincere and unsophisticated character of one like Theresa, whose heart was so evidently

fitted for all the best sympathies of human life, whose actions were evidently the natural impulse of an amiable nature; whose words, however strangely mysterious at times, were evidently truthful; and in whose excellence, whatever she said herself, he placed a confidence which nothing could shake.

Such a girl as Theresa Lord Brentford had sometimes, in his best hours of solitary meditation, imagined, and longed, but without hope, to find; one such as had been formerly traced out for him as the portrait of such a wife as his mother had desired for him, who could cherish and understand the best feelings of his nature, whom he could respect as well as love, who should be *piquante*, yet perfectly feminine, and whose influence should be such as no time could wear out, no rivalry eclipse, being the influence of love founded on entire confidence and esteem. He thought long and much of the exquisitely feminine charm in all Theresa said or did,—how he had formerly observed her sympathise in every one's sorrows, trust in every one's good intentions, and be grateful for the smallest kindness. All his fears, doubts, and apprehensions, in respect to Theresa, had vanished at once that day, like a mirage in the desert, while Lord Brentford's heart became more and more imbued with a generous, refined, and

even heroic love, which could survive every attack of suspicion or misrepresentation.

“But,” thought he with once more recurring anxiety, “should I be disappointed! Theresa looked as if bidding me a last, final farewell. Surely it cannot be that when I possess the pure, fresh, and frank affections of her young heart, we are to be divided by any misfortune! Never! Is my day-dream of felicity to be so short? am I never to promote her happiness? never to share it with her? Impossible! I could advance through life willingly to meet any difficulty, except that of living without Theresa. Absent from her, the world would become a weary world to me. I must again try to fathom the inner depths of Theresa’s mind and heart. In her I see the only mortal for whose society and sympathy I could willingly, gladly resign my own liberty. I must love Theresa through life, endlessly and faithfully, even though it be unhappily, bitterly, and vainly. Who could care for any other, after having once known her?”

Theresa meanwhile threw herself on a couch in her own room, and wept agonizing tears of sorrowful remorse, while her heart beat and beat as if it would break. Here was the death of every joyous hope in her future life, when all might perhaps so nearly have been realized. But what could that mystery be of her birth and present

position, which consigned her to such agonized uncertainty, as well as to the inevitable duty of rejecting Lord Brentford? Theresa felt that still she must, as a Christian, do the best that was possible with all that remained for her to do in this world, but she had lost her own esteem now in submitting to act the part assigned her by O'Hara, and she wrung her hands with anguish to think that she must inevitably forfeit also the good opinion of Sir Richard and Lord Brentford. Nevertheless Theresa felt not the less determined, that when the few days expired during which she had promised secrecy, the whole miserable truth should be revealed. They must despise, but she trusted they would pity her, when all the urgency of her guardian's threats and entreaties became known, when the danger to his very life was understood, when his assurances that she really was what he asked her to represent became told and—could it all be true? Could she hope that her guardian might one day realize all he had often hinted, and place her by right in such a position for life, as she now occupied for a single day by deception.

[CHAPTER VII.

"God and our cause to friend, the venture we'll abide."

SCOTT.

JOYS and sorrows, love and hatred, pleasure and pain, are all buried beneath a calm, unruffled surface in the ordinary intercourse of a country house, where people must dine and talk together with apparent composure, even though the world and all its dearest interests seem turning upside down. Beside the dinner-table at Torchester Abbey that day, there were hearts burning on the red-hot gridiron of torturing anxiety or grief, yet the conversation flowed on fluently, with well-bred decorum, and every guest distilled from the busy laboratory of his own mind some small-talk, removed as far as possible from the subject of his real feelings. Agitating thoughts are generally born dumb, and shun the light of day.

It is the privilege of small minds to escape all deep anxieties or very oppressive thoughts, therefore Anne Brownlow was free from care, except in so far as she intended to captivate Lord Tipperary. With him she generally kept up a sort of

gossiping, Horace Walpole style of chit-chat, very destructive of reputations, very full of false reports, very satirical, and rather amusing. Anne was one of those young ladies whose conversation abounded in exclamations and ecstasies, who thought it very effective in conversation to hate or to idolize without measure all those she discussed, and who rushed at a hop step and a jump over every imaginable or unimaginable subject, each as distant apparently from the other, as Calcutta from Siberia.

A silence had fallen gradually on all those of the party around, whose minds were preoccupied by the deeper joys and griefs of life, mingling in the thoughts of many like sunlight and shower in a rainbow; but Lord Brentford meanwhile kept his eyes fixed in painful perplexity on the pale and silent Theresa, seated purposely at a distance from himself, and looking more beautiful in her colourless, statue-like aspect, than even in all the gorgeous colouring of her more joyous hours. There was an evident tremulousness in her voice when obliged for a moment to address any one, which gave it infinite expression; and her eye dimmed with tears shunned theirs, while, if she caught any one for an instant looking at her, instantly her cheeks became drenched with crimson. Nothing in the conversation seemed to rouse her from a look of rigid despair, and though she

played with a fork, Lord Brentford perceived that not a morsel passed her lips. She was evidently quite heart-sunk.

Sir Richard, who was equally observant of Theresa, perceived Daniel once dart a look at her; and such a look! It was one of fierce and angry warning, while the young girl evidently quailed beneath it, and seemed ready to faint. She glanced at the door, measured the distance as if about to fly, and then, with a low desponding sigh,—sat still!

Lord Tipperary's dialogue with Anne was now in full career, and they both seemed possessed by the very spirit of nonsense when he exclaimed, in a tone of good-humoured contempt, "You are the oddest of all oddities, Miss Brownlow, but for once quite mistaken! I hate those apple-cheeked beauties, and am on the look-out for an ugly girl to fall in love with, as she would be so very grateful! So you think Lady Janet handsome in the vulgar style, and really believe that I admire her. Well! I like to hear one lady praise another, Miss Brownlow; but I see you are among those absurd people who believe what they hear. I never do. Never! and very seldom what I see."

"I am a believer in everything," replied Anne, laughing; "I delight in table-turning, I doat on mesmerism and homœopathy, I treasure up every sort and kind of marvellous story, gossip, news,

and even conjecture. Nothing offends me so unforgiveably, Lord Tipperary, as not to have whatever I tell you believed. Even an incredulous look is affronting."

"But in the end nothing turns out true. My whole life is wasted in hearing reports one day, Miss Brownlow, and in hearing them contradicted the next," observed Lord Tipperary. "It almost shakes my belief in history itself, to perceive that even the history of to-day and of yesterday cannot be accurately verified. Those stock-jobbing rascals on the Exchange, merely to gain a miserable two or three hundred thousand pounds, will blow up our whole fleet in their reports, or annihilate all our noble army. I am one of the Doubter family, and save myself trouble or anxiety meanwhile by never listening to any report until it be contradicted."

"There can be no interest now-a-days in reading ancient history, for we know already the result," observed Anne sagaciously: "nobody doubts that Cæsar is dead, and that Hannibal was defeated; therefore Gibbon and Hume are perfectly useless in these days. But I do like in the present stirring times, to see a fresh damp newspaper coming in, hot and hot with our eggs and muffins, to breakfast. Who can tell what accounts it may contain of some glorious dear-bought victory, to startle the world, and to fill every house with smiles or

tears of excitement. Waterloo is fought and done, therefore nobody can hear anything new about that. One is almost tired of talking trash about all those old Prince Regent and Napoleon times; but give me a new original grand battle, with a victory and illumination for the glory of Old England; and even I would read a leading article through to the very end."

"That would be an honour worth fighting for, and we are in hopes that our regiment may be ordered off immediately," said Captain Clifford; "we are all dying to go."

"But you may die if you do go, and I really cannot spare another partner."

"You could perhaps better spare a better dancer: but, to be serious on a serious subject, I am in the greatest hopes that our regiment may be started off next week. We were horridly bored at not going sooner, and our case for some time seemed as hopeless, and as ingloriously inactive as that of nuns in their cell wishing for freedom."

"How much better you are on a Turkey carpet here at home, than exposed to all the Crimean horrors of war—pestilence and famine! Surely you cannot be happier than happy, nor safer than safe!"

"I had really a better opinion of you, Miss Brownlow, than to expect you would give out such bread-and-butter ideas! They are fit only

for aunts and grandmothers, not for men," said Captain Clifford, carelessly; "I perfectly disdain my own destiny now, when lounging at my club-windows, or when serving my country merely by riding to Knightsbridge barracks."

"But everybody says—at least Lord Brentford says—that there will be no war. This is to be a mere demonstration, he protests!"

"Yes, because he is, like myself, heartily ashamed to be left the last man at home, when every subject of discussion but the war is an actual interruption to conversation. Children in the nursery have their dolls dressed as Turks and Russians; girls sing nothing but '*Partant pour la Syrie*;' you are working a Turk in worsted; Mrs. Brownlow is wearing a crescent in diamonds; and I have thrown aside the Racing Calendar for the leading articles. Brentford overheard that too beautiful young cousin of yours giving out very warlike ideas some days since, and expressing such unmitigated contempt of any one who willingly remains stationary, like a lamp-post at home, that he has actually bought one of my regimental chargers, and paid a long price for him too. Brentford looked as pleased to mount Blucher yesterday as any boy for the first time on his donkey."

"Your own private stable, Lord Tipperary, could furnish horses for a whole regiment," observed

Anne reflectively, "I wonder how you keep so many in exercise."

"After all, however, there are not more than a reasonable man finds necessary," answered Lord Tipperary, with an air of calculation; "I am not extravagant, but it is impossible to do with less than a pair for my phaeton, four for my drag, six hunters, a couple of good hacks for the road, two or three for my friends, and a capital gig-horse to convey me to cover. I ask no more."

"I guess not!" said Anne, smiling; "and you will find much pleasanter enjoyment with such a delightful stud at Melton, than at the Crimea."

"I shall be restored to good-humour with myself for ever when I have anything to do," replied Lord Tipperary, yawningly; "if change of place could change myself, how gladly I should try the experiment. Let me have new scenes, a new theatre of life, new dresses and decorations, new climate, and new faces. I must really go out of society, were it only to avoid seeing the French-mannered and French-minded Lady Janet Harley, who thinks I admire her. She looks so delighted to see me, with her tiresome caricatured smiles, that I always wish myself invisible. I must forsake society also to avoid hearing everybody praising a certain Miss Anne Brownlow. I have an odd way of utterly hating any one that is

universally admired, and positively I shall soon begin to dislike you ! ”

Anne looked modestly down, clasped and unclasped her bracelets, contemplated her own round white arms, and glanced with an air of gratified self-approbation at her image, reflected, with its pink and white doll-like aspect, in the bright silver covers on the dinner-table, saying very affectedly, “ Lady Janet praises you *à l’outrance*, Lord Tipperary, and says she finds you a congenial mind.”

“ I hope not ! No one has ever yet been able to fathom the depth of her ignorance, and one cannot but admire the frankness and courage with which Lady Janet fearlessly displays it,” said Lord Tipperary, laughing ; “ but at London parties she often clings to my arm, affecting as much timidity as if the room were full of brigands, and in her affectation she sinks as helplessly in her chair as if she were a rag-doll.”

“ You owe Lady Janet a good word, and indeed many, for she declares that you are the cleverest mortal on earth—the best of billiard players, equal to herself at *écarté*, a dead shot, and your dancing more than human.”

“ Lady Janet’s nonsense has one good quality, that it has always the amusing merit of being what one would least expect,” said Lord Tipperary, smiling ; “ but I am afraid, Miss Brownlow, that

you treasure up all the foolish sayings of all your friends. Pray, if you ever hear any of mine, forget them."

"Impossible, when they are all so well worth remembering, and so numerous. I was much amused yesterday with the list you gave us of the countless favours asked of you by your countless Irish relatives, and every one impossible to be granted."

"Yes! and I am thought extremely ill-natured not to be everybody's body, and more than fulfil each applicant's wishes. Lady Janet alone made fifteen impossible requests to me during this month, with a preface about my well-known good-nature. That is the most troublesome character on earth to set up for, and I advise no one to attempt it. She wished me to send her a bouquet every morning from my conservatory, to have three of her country cousins at my last ball, to get an Indian cadetship for her favourite nephew, and a nomination to Woolwich for another; to procure a lucrative office under government for a gentleman who wanted to marry her humble companion, and—the most impossible request of all—to make the Duchess of Northallerton invite her Irish aunt to a ball. She might as well attempt to take Cronstadt single-handed by storm."

The gentlemen all now joined in an animated discussion of the approaching war, while Theresa,

who sat drawing in a distant window, silently admired, with all the enthusiasm of her enthusiastic nature, how at the cry of danger to England's rights, a warlike feeling had sprung up at once like an electric impulse among the sons of Great Britain; raising even in the most supine throughout the length and breadth of the land, every dormant energy of ancient heroism and chivalry.

“Britons ! hands and hearts prepare ;
The angry tempest threatens nigh,
Deep-toned thunders roll in air,
Lightnings thwart the lurid sky.

“Earth from her utmost bounds shall wondering tell
How victory's meed ye gain'd, or conquering fell.
Britain's dread thunders bore from pole to pole,
Wherever man is found, or reflux oceans roll.”

There was now about to be a crusade in Europe for the freedom of nations as much as for glory, while an ennobling sympathy imbued all ranks and all parties in one mighty enterprise to maintain their country's honour. Theresa's eyes filled with tears of intense emotion on hearing what a burst of chivalrous patriotism had resounded from every house and from every heart when the flag of Old England was once more unfurled for war. The old times of British prowess had revived in more than its ancient splendour now, for the genius of chivalry had awakened in Europe after a forty years' repose,

and who could tell when the sword would be sheathed again? Theresa's excitable heart beat with sympathetic ardour now, when Captain Clifford eloquently described how noble was the enthusiasm of each gallant regiment as it embarked for a warlike struggle to maintain liberty in Europe; and tears of generous admiration rolled down her cheeks when she remembered how the Guards had come forth from the barracks, tossing their muskets high in the air with heroic joy at the prospect of being led to victory or death.

"Alas!" thought Theresa, "how sad already the result! Led on by their heroic commander, the Duke of Cambridge, how many have already fought, and conquered, and died,—

' Few, few shall part where many meet,
The snow shall be their winding-sheet,
And many a turf beneath their feet
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre! ' "

After Anne had only half deafened the party by singing, for Lord Tipperary's special delight, the most difficult of all bravura songs with a tempestuous accompaniment, Captain Clifford and Lord Brentford recommenced a running fire of anecdotes, which amused the listeners by their novelty, or electrified them by their ready wit and dashing off-hand style of narrative. The whole conversation was maintained in a miscellaneous, perfectly incoherent, capricious, and very

nonsensical vein, new to the absentee, Sir Richard, and exceedingly diverting. The Baronet could scarcely make himself heard in the hubbub of eager voices; when, perceiving with what perfect, undoubting certainty of success and conquest they all spoke of the Crimean campaign, he said rather gravely, "Such a thing never enters your head, apparently, as '*the chances*' of war. You all seem to consider that there are for England only certainties, though we must wade to conquest through a sea of blood. Probably any danger to Great Britain that may exist will arise, not so much from her enemies as from her own people; who, having such a very particularly good opinion of themselves, underrate her adversaries, and overrate the invincibility of her brave defenders. What man can do, our English heroes will accomplish; but we must not expect them to do more."

"When I served in China for a short time," said Captain Clifford, "I used to chat familiarly with the old Mandarins, who asked me always to calculate accurately for them how many Chinese junks, with how many men in each, it would take to conquer England. They used to listen as if I were an oracle, while I stoutly assured them that if they could only conquer the Isle of Wight, all England would surrender at discretion."

"But as the poet said,—I forget what he said,

or who he was," replied Anne vaguely; "only it was to this effect, that 'Englishmen never shall be slaves.'"

"You are quite the Queen of Trumps at a quotation," observed Lord Tipperary, laughing; "I was always too clever myself to be good at anything. During my long and well-spent life, I have remained villanously ignorant of the poets; therefore, Miss Brownlow, you shall help me to get up, for my eloquent and appropriate speech on leaving for the Crimea, a few suitable quotations full of fire and gunpowder."

"I thought you were to stay at home, Tipperary, with a doctor's certificate duly signed, that firing would give you a headache!" said Captain Clifford jestingly, while opening a perfect bushel of letters and newspapers which had arrived by the evening mail, and glancing over them with a gratified smile as well as with a considerable accession of colour. "At last here are my orders to join immediately. What a noble victory ours has been at Inkerman! The Russians are brave, but it takes seven of them to fight an Englishman, even when he is surprised in the dead of night. Well, as the poet says,

'Agincourt shall be forgot, and Cressy be an unknown spot,
And Blenheim's name be new,—
But still in story and in song,
For many an age, remember'd long,
Shall live,—*what Englishmen shall do!*'

“One might fancy that, on this occasion of my departure for the East, my friends were supplying me with a wedding trousseau! Though any old screw of a charger is scarcely to be got in all England under a price much too long for my short purse, here is news from home that some good-natured anonymous friend has actually sent me the most magnificent charger in Christendom. Who can my unknown benefactor be? Not my Cousin Brentford, of course, though you look very guilty. Confess the good deed at once, my too kind cousin, or I shall immediately take to table-turning, and turn this card-table round and round till it tells me the truth.”

“Clifford, you must not grudge me one pleasure as a cousinly consolation for the sorrow of your departure. I sent the chestnut ‘Mayfair’ that you admired last month in my stable, and he really is, I believe, the fleetest horse in England.”

“You do not anticipate, I hope, that the better part of my valour shall be discretion, or that my horse and I shall act on the old adage,

‘He that fights and runs away,
Shall live to fight another day;
But he that’s in the battle slain,
Can never live to fight again.’”

replied Captain Clifford, cordially shaking his

generous relative by the hand. "On such a charger, with the regiment he and I are about to adorn, I can do and dare anything. Unless 'Mayflower' fall in battle, which horses are apt to do when shot, especially those of a poor man, we shall at last become refulgent with military glory, do miracles of military enterprise, and return home duly medalled, to repose on our well-earned laurels."

"Yes, and to publish your military diary, I hope, 'Jottings from the Trenches, by Captain Clifford;' or, 'Small Shot by a Great Gun at Sebastopol,'" said Anne eagerly. "So many journals in these pen-and-ink times will come out that no library on earth could be able to contain one half of them."

"No library will ever contain mine!" observed Captain Clifford, recurring to his letters; "General Tarlton has kindly sent me a revolving pistol, the Duke of Liverpool a sword, my aunt, Lady Maria, a smelling bottle, Lady Anne a vinaigrette,—fancy a vinaigrette on the field of battle! and so many young ladies have transmitted lockets and sentimental studs, that my baggage, being limited to ninety pounds' weight, can contain nothing but locks of hair! Brentford, supply my place, and be a host in yourself to console all the ninety-and-nine breaking hearts I leave behind, like Lord Ullin's daughter, 'lamenting.'"

“No second-hand hearts for me!” replied Lord Brentford, carelessly jerking some burned-out cinders with the poker, “give me one capable from the first of an undying preference, and I should certainly endeavour to make myself worthy of it. For such an aim it would be worth my while to live—or even to die!”

Lord Brentford’s voice denoted a seriousness very unusual to him, and there appeared in his tone an energy of feeling so rare that Captain Clifford looked suddenly up. He then saw that his cousin’s eyes were thoughtfully fixed on Theresa, into whose beautiful young countenance a colour even richer than ordinary was streaming in torrents. It had assumed a glow like sunset, when she hurriedly bent her head over her drawing till every feature became concealed beneath a dense screen of redundant ringlets.

“Your progress through life, Brentford, will be, I am happy to think, a triumphant march, with not a wish ungratified, and with every want anticipated,” observed Captain Clifford, absently opening the recently arrived newspapers. “My home prospects being less brilliant than yours, my voice is now for war. Let me see in this gazette whether the vacant cornetcy in my new regiment has been filled up. I am rather curious to know who is to be my subaltern in the East,—

‘From fortune, pleasure, science, love, we fly,
And scorn repose when Britain takes the field.’”

While Captain Clifford, comfortably built up among pillows into the furthest recesses of a sofa, settled himself with a business-like air into his seat and ran rapidly over several columns of the "Morning Post," Lord Brentford stealthily glanced at him, concealing a look of rather shy, arch, and smiling anticipation, till the Captain's roving eye was caught suddenly by one electrifying paragraph in the Gazette. He gave a start of surprise, while every line of the newspaper flickered obscurely before his astonished eyes, and he uttered a volley of incredulous exclamations, saying, "Nonsense! impossible! it is a hoax! they are joking! 'To be Cornet by purchase, the Earl of Brentford?' It is a mistake!"

"Mistake or no mistake, that is quite true," replied Lord Brentford, smilingly, extending his hand to Captain Clifford. "You stare at me as if I were become part of a puppet-show; but is all the military glory of our family to be buttoned up in your scarlet coat? Do you imagine that with such a model cousin before me, I cannot at least follow in his footsteps?—

'Flows there a blood-drop in our English veins

That leaps with no impassion'd life,

While rings the war-trump those arousing strains

With more than battle-music strife?

Till all the chivalries which crowd our island story

Rise in their ancient truth, and reassert their glory.' "

MONTGOMERY.

“Am I awake? Pinch me, Brentford, that I may be quite certain. If a bomb from Sebastopol had burst over my head, I should not have been half so much astonished!” exclaimed the lively Captain. A bright colour mounted to his forehead with surprise, and his voice slightly quivered with friendly emotion, as he looked at his laughing young cousin, saying, “You and I, between us, Brentford, shall certainly split the trumpet of Fame by our doughty deeds. We must both try to be in for the finish at Sebastopol.”

“We shall! My name hitherto has not been much indebted to me for adorning it with distinction; but there is now no limit to my aspirings for pre-eminence,” said Lord Brentford, gaily. “Does any lady here commission me to bring her back a lock of the Czar’s beard?”

‘What woman could dream of denying
The hand that lays laurels before her?’”

Lord Brentford’s glance towards the distant corner where Theresa sat, was most particularly particular; but she only bent her head more closely down to the drawing; and if a silent tear fell upon the surface, no one knew except herself.

“Well;” exclaimed Anne, heedlessly; “when you all come back, crowned with laurels, covered with wounds and glory, may I be there to see.

But, Lord Brentford, have you really considered, weighed and measured, what going into the army leads to now?"

"Yes, it leads to the Crimea," answered he, with a look of dry humour; "and it will qualify me for the Traveller's, and for the Army and Navy Club. Clifford intends now to show himself an eagle, soaring into the very eye of the sun, and I, his cousin, to be at least a respectably useful member of his corps. My black leather portmanteau is already displayed at the door of Grant's shop in Piccadilly; bearing in tall, white letters on the top my name, hereafter to become so distinguished! Hitherto, Miss Brownlow, I have been like an oak-tree planted in a flower-pot, and sheltered in a conservatory; but, as the poet very justly remarks, meaning me,

'And, oh! how blest that hero's sleep
O'er whom a wond'ring world shall weep!'

"*A propos!* how your complexion will become bronzed with Eastern sunshine," said Anne, compassionately; "or pinched in that kingdom of frost. The climate, I am told, is atrocious. Even that noble death-ride of our glorious lancers at Bala-klava, described in the last Gazette, was not more fatal than the gradual victories of disease are now. Why then go, leaving every luxury of a luxurious existence, to face discomforts and dangers fit only

for younger brothers. I am sure the aristocracy of England have not spared themselves on this occasion; and the greatest heroes among my admirers in the East have been those I least expected. Men who appeared the most consummate puppies in St. James's or Pall Mall, never to be seen without ten-guinea pocket-handkerchiefs, primrose gloves, and glazed boots, have fought like perfect demons, and died as bravely as the bravest Roman hero."

"Nothing like a good descent for giving pluck," said Captain Clifford. "When Lord Cardigan called out, 'Here goes the last of the Cardigans!' he felt what was due to his ancestors as well as to his country; he led the way, wrestling through a thousand dangers, while almost courting death; and who ever showed a more sublime, noble-hearted composure in the storm of a thousand trials than the brave Lord Raglan? As Marshal St. Arnaud said, 'His courage is like that of antiquity.' How grand, stiff, and stately are all his well-written despatches! Not one word for himself, not an allusion to any personal feeling of his own, no excitement, no defence, no denials, no explanations, but a mere business-like detail of what he and our army have done, calmly leaving his country and posterity to do him and them entire justice. That dry reserve now seems to me very noble, very English, very like an ancient pre-

Raphaelite hero. Depend upon it a long pedigree tells in the end, always."

"Then why that incredulous amazement, Clifford, at the descendant of old Marshal Brentford volunteering now?" asked Lord Brentford, smiling. "I have been so completely wired down since my boyhood, that even my own cousin had no idea of the effervescence within. I did not, till lately, know myself; can I wonder, therefore, at not being known in some quarters where I should most wish to be favourably estimated. My character, like yours, Clifford, shall be on the true model, as much as possible, of French chivalry,—

‘D’une intrépidité sans calcul,
D’une foi sans bornes,
D’une obéissance sans discussion,
D’une fidélité sans distraction,
D’une amour sans inconstance !’”

"You would die of laughing," said Lord Tipperary, "if you could see my dear mother's letter of instructions to me about the Crimea. 'To be sure and see that my sheets are thoroughly aired; to get my dressing-box newly gilt; where the best silk stockings and cambric handkerchiefs are to be bought;' and all sorts of silver-forkisms about my comforts and luxuries, as if I were going to become a perfect Heliogabalus in the Crimea. Poor dear soul, I am glad she cannot see the Slough of Despond we are all going to at Bala-

klava, where the horses look as if they came from a knacker's yard, and where the men are all studying in the Mark Tapley school of patient hopeful, brave endurance."

"What noble letters our men all write, in a style equal to Herodotus! The merest little drummer-boy, as soon as he goes to the Crimea, becomes a perfect Hume or Gibbon!" exclaimed Lord Brentford; "I have actually felt the tears in my eyes over some of those fine, spirited, manly epistles, from the common soldiers! This comes of universal education! It gives finer motives to action, and a better way of expressing these noble feelings. I long to be penning such letters as we read from our gallant brethren. Who would not weep over that of the chivalrous Colonel Shadforth, so full of Christian devotion to God and his country, written the night before he was killed?"

Lord Brentford gave one long, earnest look of intense interest towards a certain large, old-fashioned arm-chair in the window, not far off, where nothing was visible now except a wide-spread copy of the "Morning Post" vibrating tremulously in the grasp of a very white and beautiful hand. He then added, "I once had no motive to exertion, because I had no difficulty to combat; all is altered now. I have lately been building up for myself a fairy palace of perfect felicity, adding pillar to pillar and tower to tower; but it must be scaled,

I find, by exertion. New hopes, new desires, have recently stirred up the stagnant pool of my indolent existence; for there is one great object, apparently of almost impossible attainment, the gaining or losing of which must hereafter make me happier for life than the happiest moment I ever even imagined, or more utterly miserable than I have ever yet been—and that is saying a great deal.”

“ My good worthy cousin,” said Captain Clifford, remonstratingly; “ do you actually expect me to pity one whom every mortal envies ? ”

“ We who have leisure to brood over our sufferings, have leisure to feel them most,” answered Lord Brentford, despondingly, glancing towards Theresa; “ no one enjoys the flowers of life or feels its thorns more acutely, and if there be no hope of a change for the better in the prospects of my own future years, I should be rather glad than otherwise to find this my very last.”

“ Were you or I to fall in battle, there would not be a dry eye in London ! ” said Captain Clifford, resuming his usual tone of good-humoured conceit. “ When I return, Miss Brownlow, disfigured from the war, I expect a rapturous reception, and that you shall sing me those words :—

‘ You have bled for our cause,
And the scar on your cheek
But endears you, my warrior, to me.’ ”

“ But where all are heroes, Clifford, we shall

find it very difficult to distinguish ourselves. If I have my horse killed under me, the next man I meet has, like Jim Macdonald, survived the loss of two. If I lose a limb, what is that compared to Sir Thomas Troubridge, and even the loss of life itself is but what every man in our army seems to consider a matter of course when his country requires it.

‘But, oh ! how blest they sink to rest
Who close their eyes on Victory’s breast.’ ”

“Never had any nation such brave, devoted sons as free and happy England,” observed Sir Richard ; “never had our enemies so much reason to respect her ; never had she so much reason to glory in the dauntless chivalry of her army as now, when with tears of anguish for the bravest of the brave, laid beneath the turf, Britannia sees how every life, most precious and dear at home, is placed, in defence of freedom, foremost for danger or death. What can you, or I, or any one, do now to render ourselves conspicuous?”

“If we want to do what no Englishman has done yet, we must run away !” said Lord Brentford, with vivacity ; “we shall belong to a Mutual Emulation Society, and achieve something to make ourselves celebrated as long as Fame has a trumpet left in her hand, or any breath to blow therein. Our swords should be inscribed, like those of the

knights in chivalrous times, with this fine old motto,—

‘ Ne me tire pas sans raison,
Ne me remette pas sans honneur.’ ”

“ Yes, Brentford, my respected cousin, will now appear in his own noble nature, for noble indeed, from our old Eton days till now, I know that to be in heart and principle, never meant for a drone in the hive of life,” said Captain Clifford, warmly grasping his friend by the hand; “ the greater our difficulties, the greater our pleasure in success; but while making this warlike effort, the conquest over yourself—over your own indolence—is grander than any conquest over mere Russian savagery, for you have hitherto been, like so many of us, your own greatest enemy. Now my dear cousin will unmask his own character to himself, and discover his own immense capabilities of action. You already find, as I do, that there is no happiness until we discover the sphere of exertion that best fills up our own whole talent for usefulness. Those who remain listless and unserviceable, as a loose harp-string, feel always out of tune, and learn to hate or despise themselves.”

During all this *laissez aller* discussion, a deep flush, which grew deeper and deeper still, glowed over the cheek and throat of Theresa, extending to the very tips of her fingers, and her eye glistened with the semblance of a tear. While she

looked up for a moment, those superb eyes brightened now into the most dazzling lustre, and when Theresa answered an accidental question from Anne, the clear silver tone of her young voice had become tremulous with subdued emotion.

“ I remember, when a boy at Harrow, having the sort of bull-dog courage that made me wish continually to be fighting, with or without a cause,” observed Lord Tipperary, picking up the newspaper. “ To cure my taste in the Trafalgar line, my mother took me one day to see all the wooden-legged sailors at Greenwich Hospital, but she omitted afterwards to exhibit the mutilated old heroes of Chelsea. Therefore I have always preserved my taste for military tactics. I long impatiently now to rush like you, Clifford, into life and action in the East, where every raw recruit such as myself, becomes at once a knight of chivalry in the mighty theatre of war.”

“ I wish it were only a theatre !” exclaimed Anne, pathetically. “ But, Lord Brentford ! for you to go in real earnest, leaving such an opera-box, and that beautiful new phaeton, in order to rough it at Sebastopol, seems to me, begging your pardon, mere insanity. You should be put into a strait-waistcoat ! I could almost say to you now, as the boy did to the man he saw standing close to a donkey, ‘ you seem really *beside yourself* !’ It is all very well for the mere nobodies of society to

be marching and countermarching, or for younger brothers to feel compensated by a pension and a medal for losing their limbs; but you are leaving all the prosperities and all the gaieties of London to kill or be killed by a set of savage Russians, the most vulgar, boorish wretches on the face of the earth. Really, Lord Brentford, one might fancy you had been, like some of the common soldiers, a little tipsy when you enlisted."

"Precisely! a very clever sergeant beguiled me, and here he is, Frederick Clifford," replied Lord Brentford, laying his hand smilingly on the shoulder of his cousin. "I am tired of doing what I please, how I please, and when I please; but you seem no more to believe in my Crimean propensities, Miss Brownlow, than in Drury Lane thunder. Depend upon this, however, when I take Her Majesty's shilling I mean to do Her Majesty's work, and shall not be what is called in the army 'a Queen's hard bargain.' I have not yet, however, earned my spurs, and must not therefore boast till I take them off."

"How soon you will tire of this lark, and be ready to sing 'The soldier tired,' or 'There's no place like home,'" continued Anne, heedlessly. "I am sure the 'Gazette' was very much astonished when employed to record your commission, but luckily the uniform of your regiment is very becoming. You should now make the best of

this, however, and turn your camp into a perfect Chobham in the Crimea, giving champagne luncheons to the Turkish ladies, and performing polkas with them to the military band,—

‘So when pleasure begins to grow dull in the East,
Then, pray, order your wings, and come back to the West.’ ”

“ You would make me out a mere dancing-master,” said Lord Brentford, smiling. “ I suppose Miss Brownlow expects my soldiering to be a little in the style of Sir Frizzle Pumpkin, and that I shall purchase all my military chargers at Astley’s.”

“ Live and learn, Miss Brownlow ! You shall see what you shall see,” whispered Captain Clifford, oracularly. “ The greatest heroes at Waterloo were composed of men bred up in the very lap of luxury like Brentford, who will be as ready to lead in a forlorn hope as he has always been to lead in a steeple-chase. Blood will show, and Brentford is a thorough-bred English nobleman !”

“ Well !” said Anne, reflectively ; “ it proves the wretchedness of idle men who have nothing to do, when I see the very desperate steps they will take to escape ennui. To be awoke out of your bed, Lord Brentford, in the dead of night, by a set of drunken, delirious Russians, and to defend life and limb before you are half awake, or lose both, is a sort of thing well worth avoiding,

even though you were afterwards to make a distinguished appearance in Lord Raglan's despatches among the killed and wounded."

"I am wounded at home—very deeply wounded," replied Lord Brentford, in a voice that reached the very inmost heart of Theresa, who had turned aside, so that he saw only the edge of a scarlet cheek. "It is to seek a cure that I go abroad; and in offering my life to my Queen and country, I offer what is much less precious to me than it once was—than it would have become, had others loved me as I loved them."

"Oh, indeed!" said Anne, applying these words to herself. "That is very affecting; but, perhaps, you are mistaken. Perhaps—perhaps when you return, crowned with Crimean laurels, to be laid at our feet, we may be more than happy to welcome you home. When may we hope to see you back?"

"Not till England is victorious over all her enemies, and with unsullied glory too. Then," added Lord Brentford, assuming a tone of banter, while Anne looked down with an air of conscious beauty, quite lost upon the preoccupied mind of the young peer; "then I shall wear my heart upon my sleeve, hoping to find it valued at home as it deserves."

Theresa trembled with subdued emotion, as she perceived with what a deep, noble, and influential attachment she was loved. The effect of her few

and almost heedlessly uttered words, in favour of an active and useful life, had led to most unimaginable results, and Lord Brentford seemed already to have acquired in Theresa's eyes the lofty air of a more matured manhood. He looked able, as he was willing, to buffet with all difficulties, and to advance courageously through countless impediments along the path of distinction, to the highest pinnacle of honour and glory. It was rendered as plain as words or looks would make it by Lord Brentford, that Theresa's good opinion, and her attachment were the chief objects at which he aimed; but the glow of sympathising enthusiasm and of grateful pleasure which for one short moment thrilled pleasantly through the young girl's heart, was checked back and chilled into ice by a fearful consciousness of her own real and most disastrous position.

There are in every life some short moments that seem like years crowded into an instant, when a tumult of ideas and feelings are so concentrated together, that they appear unconscious of time or space. Thus Theresa felt overwhelmed by a multitude of conflicting thoughts, among which, high above all, rose the conviction that Lord Brentford loved her, that to deserve her esteem he was about to banish himself from home, that the dearest hope of his heart was to claim her on his return, that she herself loved him with a depth and tenderness equal to his own, and that while

life remained she never, never, never could be his!

Theresa mechanically bid the company good night; and when she followed Mrs. Brownlow out of the saloon, her hand, which Lord Brentford grasped for a moment in his own, was cold as death. She tried twice to look up, but failed. She struggled to recover her composure, but in vain; her spirits sunk entirely, her heart failed, she staggered towards a chair, and fainted.

“How I detest scenes and scene-makers!” exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow angrily. “These sentimental catastrophes are quite out of fashion now. The abigails in ‘High Life below Stairs’ were always falling into a swoon; but I have no patience for such trash.”

“Nevertheless,” observed Captain Clifford, when Theresa had nearly recovered, “your niece looks so beautiful in a fainting fit, that she should do nothing but faint.”

“There ought to be a daguerreotype taken of her in a state of graceful insensibility I suppose,” answered Mrs. Brownlow satirically. “Insensible as you may think her for a minute, however, trust me that the young lady knows well what she is about in general,—

‘There’s nothing on earth, in sea, or air,
Too strange, too high, too wild, too gay,
For spirits like hers to dare.’”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Aimer, c’est rêver de bonheur,
Etre aimé c’est le bonheur même.”

French Proverb.

ANNE had lingered behind talking to her father in the saloon, and listening for a few minutes with irresistible curiosity to some odds and ends of conversation among the young men, though apparently quite engrossed with all that Mr. Brownlow addressed to herself in that tone of amiable parental affection which he always assumed before company, and only then as his full-dress manner.

“None of us will need to be mere feather-bed soldiers, Brentford,” said Captain Clifford, stirring up a tumbler of negus. “We shall all find occasion to become hard-working men, every inch of us; ready, if required, to fall as heroes, like Cathcart, and Campbell, and Blair, love to fall for their country.”

“True, and many better men than I have done so lately,” answered Lord Brentford, with momentary seriousness. “I could take off my hat in the street to every Crimean-looking soldier, to every Crimean-looking beard that I see.”

"Then you would often be respectfully saluting your tailor or your dentist," observed Anne, laughing. "I never saw such a warlike aspect in any barracks as that of the man who measured me off a yard of satin at my silk-mercier's lately. He looked like the hero of a hundred fights, or like the chivalrous ghost of the Chevalier Bayard."

"*A propos* of ghosts, is it true that this old abbey is haunted by one?" asked Lord Tipperary, yawning. "I am told it is a noisy, consequential apparition, that struts through the passages all night, slamming doors that had no business to be open, rattling window-shutters till the very bars crack, and shrieking out for help in some ghastly trouble, such as ghosts usually complain of, having been murdered, or some little annoyance of that kind.

'Why sleeps he not when others are at rest?'

"Hush!" whispered Captain Clifford, aside, with sudden gravity; "there is a story about this house—a very strange one! That midnight wanderer is said to be Sir Francis Brownlow, the murdered brother of our host. Shot by some unknown assassin, he must wander about, according to ghostly etiquette, until the criminal be brought to justice."

"How very uncomfortable!" replied Lord Tipperary, affecting to shudder. "A ghost is in general rather a troublesome party to deal with.

I am told you have a ghost story to tell, Clifford, so awful, that no one has yet been found brave enough to hear the end."

"True! No one has! The ladies invariably go into hysterics," said Captain Clifford, mysteriously; "and the gentlemen all run out of the room."

"Then wait till I am gone, and the door shut," said Anne, laughing. "I do not wish my hair to be set on end to-night, as it is particularly well-dressed."

"What do you take me for, Miss Brownlow, to attempt a ghost story in such broad lamp light as this. No! we must sit in the dark,—a subterranean room if possible, and all the melo-dramatic paraphernalia. Sir Walter Scott, when he told his ghost-stories, used secretly to tie strings to the legs of all the tables and chairs, and to pull these invisible threads at the most effective moment. The last ghost I saw of that kind, when a boy at Abbotsford, I felt really proud of myself for not dying of fright."

"You know," whispered Anne, aside; "almost before any of us were born, and certainly before I can remember, an uncle of mine was most treacherously murdered in this house."

"Yes;" replied Captain Clifford, earnestly; "he was basely assassinated by his own confidential factor!"

"That's a lie!" interrupted a rough, loud, emphatic voice, sounding shrill and angrily from behind a curtain. "That's a lie! That's a lie!"

These words were repeated again and again, with increasing emphasis, and never were there two more astonished faces than those with which Lords Brentford and Tipperary looked at each other. Anne stole one glance of merry mischief, her eyes sparkling and glittering with fun at the indignant countenance of Captain Clifford, on hearing himself so unceremoniously contradicted, and then she said in a voice tremulous with suppressed laughter,—

"Can that be the ghosts come to set us all right? There again! This is a famous opportunity, at home, to exercise your combative prowess on that gentleman behind the curtain, giving you the lie direct! You must shoot him, certainly, and we shall have a real fight about the fire-side. Now smooth your ruffled feathers, Captain Clifford, for that is only Mamma's favourite parrot, which has been taught, whenever any one speaks in a peculiarly earnest voice, to scream out, 'That's a lie!' He is probably oftener right than wrong, particularly when gentlemen are making civil speeches to ladies, or asserting any wonderful facts."

Poll had now got into a perfect paroxysm of giving the lie to every gossiping report, every new

opinion, and every friendly sentiment that followed throughout the evening, but especially to Anne; who gave out all her notions, historical, geographical, and literary, in such miscellaneous unconnected fragments, that it seemed as if her mind were a broken mirror reflecting fifty different images at once. She never allowed herself to remain long overlooked in any conversation, without elbowing her way into it, however ignorant of the subject under discussion, for she thought it raised her own consequence, if she could keep the general attention on herself, by asking a continual succession of inapplicable questions, or, as Captain Clifford called them, "Notes and Queries."

To keep all the gentlemen in mind of her existence, Anne, whose education had been entirely limited to music and dancing, grammars, and vocabularies, burst forth now with a grand display of her usual ignorance, while Captain Clifford could not but think of the Frenchman, who said, "C'est un grande misère que de n'avoir pas assez d'esprit pour bien parler, ou assez de jugement pour se taire."

"You surely recollect last year at Drury Lane, Lord Brentford, *à propos* of the Russian war, when that beautiful story was acted about the Czar, showing how laboriously he once worked in our dockyards at Plymouth. I believe it was really a true incident!" said Anne, in a tone of perfect

self-confidence. "The dresses and decorations were magnificent. How very sportsmanlike, and so very English it was in him, afterwards, when he sent a cup to be run for at the Doncaster races."

"He will have to run very soon himself, I suspect," observed Captain Clifford, ominously. "The Czar has prepared a bitter cup for himself."

"Yes, poor man! I believe the Russian Emperors are always poisoned in coffee," said Anne, vaguely. "I wonder they ever drink any—one would certainly prefer tea!"

"Of course, if the one were poisoned and the other not. Miss Brownlow, I live in continual admiration of your judgment and prudence! The Czar might live for ever if he had you for a Privy Councillor."

"I have no wish to become, like Queen Elizabeth, an exile to Siberia; and the most detestable fruit I ever tasted was a Siberian crab-apple," continued Anne, delighted at her own erudition. "What are you to live upon in the Crimea? You will, of course, all go for some weeks, at first, to the best hotels."

"At Rome we must do as Rome does, Miss Brownlow; and you know an old woman very sensibly said 'that in Turkey we must do as the turkeys do,'" replied Captain Clifford, satirically. "We shall march always on Turkey carpets, and live on Turkey figs."

“When you conquer Russia, I hope the French will not die of the snow as they did in old Napoleon’s time.”

“Trust the present Emperor, who has even more genius than his uncle,” answered Captain Clifford, gravely. “Napoleon is to furnish all his soldiers with snow-boots, as well as with respirators and comforters. I have these facts from ‘my own correspondent.’ The French artillery will travel from Paris on patent sledges.”

“What does your own correspondent say from Greenland or Japan?” asked Anne, laughing. “I suppose you have despatches from the moon and stars.”

“That may, perhaps, be managed at last, if those distant globes be inhabited, which Professor Whewell and I both doubt,” replied Captain Clifford, assuming a learned look. “A teasing limit is put to everything in this world. Trees cannot grow quite up to the sky, nor does my soaring intellect reach to the planets as yet.”

“I would give all the worlds we see, whether inhabited or not, and all the happiness they contain, to be only sure of what I most wish on this little earth!” exclaimed Lord Brentford, picking up a rose which Theresa had dropped. “Give me, I ask no more, a happy and victorious return home from our campaign, and to be rapturously

welcomed by one for whose sake I go, and for whose sake alone I wish ever to return."

Anne, who applied this parting speech to herself, slept that night with an imaginary coronet floating over her head, and she closed her eyes with a vivid impression how superior was the English earldom of Brentford to the mere Irish barony of Tipperary.

Next morning, Sir Richard found the whole party at breakfast in a state of whispering consternation, evidently aghast at some distressing and totally unexpected event, though something in the face of Mrs. Brownlow gave him an instinctive feeling that in her apparent surprise and grief some tinge of deceit existed. There never had been, hitherto, much in any of Mrs. Brownlow's perplexities or sorrows to claim the respectful sympathy which Sir Richard would have given to the trials of anyone else; but as he advanced towards her, with an extended hand, to offer his before-breakfast greeting, he said, in his own honest, frank tone of brotherly interest, "My dear friend! You seem, as an abigail would say, 'struck all of a heap.' Nothing amiss, I hope, with Bijou or the Mackaw? Is there a rise in the blonde-lace market, or a scarcity in the ribbon-trade? But where is our punctual Theresa this morning?"

"That is the very subject of my distracting uneasiness," replied Mrs. Brownlow, adopting a tone and manner that Sir Richard felt was inten-

tionally deceiving him. "Theresa was seized last night, before going to bed, with a frightful fit of shivering, and our village doctor, this morning, says she is probably in for most malignant typhus fever! Only think what a bore to us!"

"And a much greater bore for Theresa!" answered the Baronet, in a tone of reproachful indignation. "Is that all the sympathy you express for the best and prettiest niece in the world? Let me see her instantly."

"Impossible! Oh, quite impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. Brownlow, starting vehemently, while the whole blood of her body seemed mounting to her face. "It is excessively infectious. Theresa's life depends on quietness. No mortal but the doctor and attendants must see her. She is already raving with delirium, and I am really frightened to death, but, of course, must brave it all, as no one else, except myself, may enter. Anne is too young for such scenes, but this could not have happened at a time more inconvenient to me —"

"Have you sent to London for the very best advice?" asked Sir Richard, in a tone energetic from anxiety. "Sir Henry Arden should be summoned instantly, or Sir Francis Everington—I have heard much in favour of Doctor Stratford,—let us have one of these, or all—why not all?—why not every one most likely to preserve so precious, so inestimable a life?"

Mrs. Brownlow turned away, and Sir Richard indignantly traced an expression most unaccountable to him, of cold contempt for the suffering girl, in her eye and voice, while she replied indifferently: "Whatever is right, shall, of course, be done; but I have a perfect confidence in our village pill-box. Doctor Dorrington is excellent; he is doing all that can be imagined, and more, for the poor girl."

"That 'poor girl' being Theresa Brownlow, the beautiful young proprietor of this noble place, and the only child of our eldest brother! Really, Mrs. Daniel, my niece shall not be treated merely like a sick pauper, attended only by the village doctor! No! We must send for better advice instantly, or I shall myself ride to London and summon the best!"

Mrs. Brownlow, with a very ill-used, irritated, but perplexed look, turned hurriedly away and left the room, saying she would consult her husband what must be done, but she returned no more. Sir Richard, meanwhile, anxiously watched all day for tidings, but heard only from the servants, as they glided past, that Miss Brownlow continued to get no worse, and that Mr. Brownlow had gone in his carriage to London. "Probably," thought Sir Richard, feeling more satisfied, "to bring back a physician."

The greatest of all efforts on very exciting occasions is to do nothing, and now Sir Richard

felt like a caged lion, as he paced from window to window, in the library, at Torchester, foaming with anxiety and unable to rest, while he thought with apprehensive interest of the lovely young Theresa, overwhelmed evidently by some very painful secret with which her heart seemed ready to burst, yet the agonizing nature of which she dared not reveal; and a deep conviction became vividly impressed on his mind, that her very life was sinking beneath the weight of some unaccountable remorse or fear.

What strange mystery could there be so overwhelming to Theresa's whole nature, from which her heart and soul so evidently revolted in disgust, while yet unable to throw it off? In Sir Richard's life, counting above thirty years, much of which had passed in solitary exile, few had ever been dear to him; but since returning home, that young and lovely girl, his niece, appeared the only bright star shining in a wide horizon of darkness and disappointment. The gentleness of Theresa's manner, the depth of feeling that glowed in her beautiful eyes, and the intense sensibility of her voice, had all reached Sir Richard's kindest of hearts, and he would have given uncounted gold to see the young Theresa once again, and, above all, to see her recovered.

At luncheon, and during the day, Mrs. Brownlow answered all Sir Richard's assiduous inquiries

in a tone of rather absent sulkiness, but the only point on which she expressed herself very decidedly was, that Doctor Dorrington had issued a most arbitrary command against any one disturbing Theresa, by even a momentary visit, as her life depended on perfect repose.

Somehow the penetrating mind of Sir Richard felt during the whole day, that there was falsehood in Mrs. Brownlow's look and voice—he had an intuitive sense of truth; he saw nothing honest or straightforward in her expression, and he became impressed with the consciousness that she was deceiving him.

It became far advanced in the forenoon, and Sir Richard, unable to rest for perplexity, had continued some time reading or writing, when suddenly the thought darted into his mind that he might, before dinner, steal up to the door of Theresa's sick-room, and ascertain for himself whether his young niece were actually recovering or in any danger. The dry reserve in Mrs. Brownlow's manner ever since this illness was announced, had forbid the possibility of Sir Richard ascertaining all he wished to know about the dear object of his affectionate solicitude, and the plan of once more seeing her, even though he might remain unseen himself, was most irresistibly attractive to his warm-hearted feelings.

No sooner said than done! The Baronet,

always impulsive, rose instantly, snatched up his candlestick, and proceeded with cautious steps to the room, where he had once already visited his niece. He knocked repeatedly and received no answer; slowly and noiselessly he then opened the door. All was still, dark, and silent. He advanced and discovered the room to be totally empty, looking as if it never had been inhabited, and never intended to be inhabited again. The curtains were rolled up, the carpet taken off, the bed-clothes removed, the picture-frames in papers, the mirrors all covered, and in short, the whole apartment was evidently *en papillottes* for the season.

Sir Richard stood for a moment aghast! Where in all that prodigious house, a perfect labyrinth of rooms, could he find Theresa? yet difficulties were always with him a spur to action, and very seldom defeated him; but the gong at this moment sounded its loudest and most peremptory note for luncheon, and it gives a summons that very few are inclined to dispute. "Somehow," said Anne to Captain Clifford, as she descended the broad staircase of Torchester Abbey, "a gong always gives me the idea of a particularly excellent repast. A bell collects vulgar hungry people to roast mutton and apple-pie, but one always connects the idea of a man-cook and turtle with a gong. How I do'admire Monsieur Soyer for

going to the Crimea! when he comes back, I think we must give him a public dinner, and let him cook it himself. I should like much to go as a nurse to the Crimea myself; my old governess used to say I could excel in anything, from getting up fine linen to singing through an opera."

"Pray let me be safe home before you go out as a nurse," replied Captain Clifford; "you inflict more wounds than you can ever cure, and I would rather any day have a broken arm than a broken heart."

No better accounts transpired all that forenoon of Theresa's illness, and Sir Richard felt the most gloomy apprehensions, from observing the extreme agitation of Mrs. Brownlow, who fidgeted on her seat during luncheon with uncontrollable impatience, changed colour several times, ate nothing, and retired in haste much sooner than usual.

CHAPTER IX.

"Alive again? Then show me where he is—

I'll give a thousand pounds to look upon him."

SHAKSPEARE.

WHATEVER happens in a family, whether people's hearts are breaking with grief or dancing with joy, still people dine; but at the dinner hour that day no lady appeared, as Mrs. Brownlow was supposed to be in attendance on Theresa, of whom the accounts continued still unfavourable. Anne always cultivated a little interesting cough, which could be increased or diminished as the case might require, and she was peremptorily desired on this occasion to be absent also, as Mr. Brownlow had his own reasons for wishing that all his guests might see how ill-timed the longer continuation of their visit would be at Torchester Abbey.

There are many and great difficulties in being at the head of a large residence in the country, which has obtained an established reputation for being hospitable, and the greatest of these is to get politely rid of a pleasant, easy-going party, con-

fident in their own power to be agreeable, and never imagining that as long as they condescend to please, the host can be otherwise than pleased. Few visitors have sufficiently studied the wisdom of Solomon when he says, "Take thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he weary of thee and curse thee."

It is to be hoped that Mr. Brownlow did not quite go to the latter extreme, but he very nearly did so, being heartily weary of acting the unwilling host to unwelcome guests, however entertaining and however distinguished. When announcing the unavoidable absence of Mrs. Brownlow from dinner, Daniel politely requested Captain Clifford to supply her place, who acceded at once to this proposal, but immediately afterwards vanished from the drawing-room, and not having returned when dinner was announced, the party rather wonderingly proceeded down stairs without him. There, presiding already at the head of the dining-table, sat a female figure, which Sir Richard at first mistook very naturally for Mrs. Brownlow, seeing her usual cap and shawl there, but after a second glance he recognised Captain Clifford sitting in the place of honour, his eyes glittering with smiles of irrepressible humour. He had clandestinely bribed his old acquaintance Madame Fleurie to supply a shawl and cap, with which he now personated Mrs. Brownlow at her own

table, and the whole party, after an astonished stare of perplexity, recognised, with a mixture of indignation and laughter, the comic face of Captain Clifford, who turned with graceful ease to Mr. Brownlow, saying,—

“ You see I am as obedient to the wishes of my host as an embodied echo ! Having been invited for this day only, and by particular desire, to represent Mrs. Brownlow, may I hope, ladies and gentlemen, for your support, your countenance, and perhaps even your applause.”

“ You may,” answered Lord Brentford, with a vain attempt at gravity ; “ but this is a most fraudulent proceeding, for I really felt, during the first moment, imposed upon, bamboozled, in short ; and there stands Mr. Brownlow, immovably planted near the door, petrified with amazement. No wonder !”

Captain Clifford now whirled himself round in his chair to catch the astonished eye of his host, saying in a voice which most daringly imitated Mrs. Brownlow’s usual tone of desultory fretfulness,—

“ Really, Mr. B., your unpunctuality will become the death of me ! I shall be actually starved at last some day ; I shall sink under all my sufferings, and then you will see what it is to lose the best of wives. Perhaps you may find another who enjoys waiting, who likes the dinner to be

cold, or overdone, but I do not, yet I never receive a button's worth of thanks for letting mine be daily spoiled. That congealed soup was once hot, and the salmon which has been brought at such an enormous expense from London, (not less than thirty shillings), is scarcely eatable now. You know that Lord Brentford is most sinfully fond of a good dinner, and Captain Clifford lives for nothing else, therefore think what their feelings must be now! When the Dukes of Middlesex and Wolverton dined here last, they both agreed that our soup would have been perfect one minute sooner. My kind friend Louisa Middlesex (the Duchess, you know) took our part, and I remember she turned to dear Dorothy Wolverton, saying, 'My dear Duchess! if you want a perfect dinner—quite beyond perfection—dine with Mrs. Brownlow when her husband is absent. He spoils the best dinner in London every day, by being five minutes too late.' Fanny Burlington says—you know Lady Burlington?"——

"Slightly, for she is my aunt," interposed Lord Tipperary, nodding assentingly; "I never knew till this instant that her name is Fanny. I shall call her by it as you do next time we meet, and see how her dignity-ship takes the joke, though I were to perish in the attempt."

"No one is a whit the worse for our making free and easy use of their names when they are

absent, and what an accession of dignity it gives to us commoners, if we can allow ourselves the harmless indulgence of dropping people's titles. When in company formerly with Mrs. Drummond Armitage, I took a vow for one entire month never to give any peers or peeresses their titles. She felt quite eclipsed, poor soul! in her own particular line, when I talked to her of the Dowager Countess as 'that dear old dot, Anne Connaught;' and of her daughter-in-law as 'that darling Polly Knaresborough.' I should like to see who would dare to 'Polly' her, when in Lady Knaresborough's own presence. The difference between those who really are intimate with persons of rank and those who are not, is this:—the pretender drops their titles with vulgar familiarity when absent, but gives it most subserviently in their presence, but a great man's really familiar friends drop his title when in conversation with the peer himself, but invariably give him all his little honours and glories when speaking of him to strangers. However," continued Captain Clifford, recommencing his merry masquerade of personating Mrs. Brownlow, with a complacent laugh, "Wolverton is my prime favourite, and no love is lost between the dear duke and me. Excellent creature! Mr. B. is quite jealous! My two pets in society are Wolverton and Brentford. No wonder! I do say that Brentford is the *ne plus*

ultra of perfection without exception—one of the pleasantest——”

“Spare my blushes, Mrs. Brownlow!” exclaimed Lord Brentford, raising his hand with a deprecating laugh; “draw it mild, if you please! I know I richly deserve all you are going to say in my favour, and more, but spare the modesty of the most modest and diffident of men.”

“On no account! Truth is truth, and ought to be spoken. Mr. B., I consider my favourite here, Lord Brentford, a model man. He has every conceivable and inconceivable merit. He is the best of human beings—the very best! I utterly despair of ever doing him half justice. People talk well of his cousin, Captain Clifford! A mere nobody, not fit to hold a candle to him in the dark! A conceited, insufferable coxcomb! his purse as empty as his head, and both are light enough. I constantly warn all girls against liking him; particularly Anne. You know, Mr. B., the last time we talked that subject over together, you specially warned me against encouraging that detrimental younger brother, Captain Clifford, about the house. He requires a very great deal of repressing to keep him down, but I have always looked perfectly savage at him since. He is fit for nothing but to be the buffoon of a dinner-table now and then, and I never can see the point of his jokes. *A propos!* how dull our circle is to-day

without the young ladies ! Our niece Theresa is so ill, that it would be but common humanity to send for her sister Fanny from Ireland."

Mr. Brownlow started, coloured, grew pale again, and fidgeted in his seat most uneasily, while he stole a furtive glance at Sir Richard, who appeared to be laughing quite unsuspectingly, and said,—

"You are getting far beyond your depth in our family matters now, Captain Clifford. When acting a part you should ascertain all the antecedents, and up to this minute you were excellent, as good in personation as Charles Mathews, I must allow. My niece Theresa has, however, no sister. Fanny, the twin sister of Theresa, was drowned when a child, twelve years ago."

"Excuse me, but I have known her intimately since. The beautiful Fanny is quite as much alive as her sister. I fell in love with her not above a few months ago in Ireland," replied Captain Clifford, snatching off the cap and shawl so as to resume his own character. "Here are two credible witnesses, Brentford and myself, who know both your nieces. Never were two girls more beautiful than Theresa and Fanny in their contrast as well as in their resemblance. The one dark as Murillo's laughing Hebe in the gallery at Madrid, and Fanny fair as Titian's St. Cecilia at Dresden, but both cast in the same perfect mould, though so differently coloured."

Daniel absolutely writhed with agony under the glance of inquiring astonishment which Sir Richard now fixed upon him, and, losing all presence of mind, he gave a ghastly laugh, saying,—

“This is a painful subject! very painful! It involves a mystery that I cannot explain to you, Richard, till to-morrow. There are strange circumstances in our family. Since that fearful calamity to poor Francis this house has had many stories connected with his girls and himself. People make such mistakes! and Captain Clifford is quite wrong, but there are many things to agitate and perplex me. Only to-night one of my footmen, seeing a light in that part of the house never inhabited since the death of our poor brother, opened a door which led into the deserted north wing, when, soon after, he uttered a shrill scream, and was found stretched across the door-way in a fit. The poor fellow was stiff as a corpse, and evidently almost crazed with terror, but he refuses to say what had so startled his bewildered faculties. Some of the other servants say they saw the distant figure of a man gliding along the garden-walk towards that very place where our brother was assassinated. As the moonlight shone brilliantly, like the sun itself, they saw the man’s retreating shadow, and declare that his face, when he looked back once, was ghastly white and spectral.”

Mr. Brownlow had now gained his immediate object, which was to turn the current of thought and conversation away from Theresa, and every other subject flagged until the party at length broke up early. Sir Richard, when bidding his brother good night, said, in his own manly, frank, straightforward voice,—

“Remember, I am promised an explanation to-morrow, Daniel, and I hope it may not be in the style of your old explanations formerly, which left me always more in the dark than ever.”

Mr. Brownlow's eyes looked anywhere but at Sir Richard, and a red spot burned on either cheek as he repeated, in a very constrained, agitated voice, his promise to be explicit next day; but, meanwhile, that night was passed by the wretched man in pacing up and down his room, beset by a thousand terrified anticipations of being thoroughly detected, and inventing a thousand artful tales with which he hoped still to deceive his brother, though Sir Richard was now evidently wide awake to suspicion.

In the gloom-stricken corridor of those rooms formerly used by Sir Francis, not a voice or a footstep was ever heard after dusk, and the servants even by day conversed in low whispers when they mentioned the murdered master of Torchester Abbey, whose picture it was perfectly well known came forth from its frame every

night, crying aloud for vengeance. The pallid looks and admonitory warnings of the servants, who glanced at each other with a very peculiar expression, their hair rising upon end, whenever those apartments were named which had once been occupied by Sir Francis, had from the first led Sir Richard to suppose that, as is usual with murdered men, his brother was imagined in the servants' hall not able to rest in his grave. Such ghosts never forgive till the assassin is discovered and punished, who has treacherously hurried them into the land of spirits. Noises were reported to have been heard in the north wing after midnight; shrieks and groans, shuffling steps on the stair, the supernatural slamming of doors, and a lumbering noise on the floor, as if some heavy body were drawn slowly along. It could not possibly be caused by rats, though Mr. Brownlow had several times caused a storm of indignation by hinting that the most authenticated ghosts have generally turned out to be so; but still the refractory housemaids refused to encounter the terrors of an apparition by passing through those deserted rooms after dusk.

Almost every man doubts, yet half believes, in apparitions from another world; but Sir Richard felt incapable of any supernatural terrors; and when, strolling towards his own room, it suddenly occurred to him that he would for once like,

as the door of the north wing had accidentally been left open, to visit alone the apartments of his brother and of Lady Brownlow, both so dear to his memory. The whole scene within those rooms, as he now advanced, was a perfect modern Herculaneum, and long cobwebs hung like banners from the roof. The rusty locks, when he turned them, sounded like the groans of the dead, and the grates were black with the ashes of long-consumed fires. The dark, sombre wainscot cast a gloomy shadow over the large arm-chairs, in which none had sat for years, and over tables on which lay the books that Sir Francis had been reading on the very day of his death. There were marks in them to show where he had expected next morning to resume his studies; and along with these lay the pretty piece of ladylike crochet with which Lady Brownlow had last been engaged beside her husband. Her needle yet stood in an unfinished stitch, and close to her work-basket were the stalks of some roses yet mouldering in the flower-glasses. High above all in that scene of desolation hung the portraits, which were supposed even now to haunt these chambers, of Sir Francis and Lady Brownlow; fresh and vivid as they had both looked when he saw them last, long years ago, then in the brightness of most prosperous felicity. But all was desolate now in that once happy home; and a

tear rolled down the manly cheek of Sir Richard as he thought on times, on scenes, never, never to return.

“ Ah ! such is human life, so gliding on,
It glimmers like a meteor, and is gone ! ”

This was a very solemn hour in which to be alone with every remembrance of the past, and the eyes of those two life-like pictures following Sir Richard still, wherever he turned. The resemblances were wonderful ; and the grave, sweet eyes of Lady Brownlow, always formerly so full of kindness, seemed now mournfully bent upon him, as if still there were sympathy, as in old times, between them.

While thus haunted by the phantoms of his brain, by recollections of his boyish days and of his murdered brother, the silence became dreary and desolate, as if there had been no other living being left on the earth but himself. The rain pattered, the wind moaned ; and Sir Richard, placing his elbows on the table, and burying his face in his hands, meditated long and deeply on all the lost and buried hours of his past existence ; on the memory of those who once had loved him, on his early and still unchangeable love for Emily Plantagenet, on the solitude of heart with which he now felt as if all considered him a stranger, while even Theresa, his own young niece,

evidently met him with unconquerable apprehension, which nothing seemed able to diminish.

In a long banishment of above twelve years, Sir Richard, day after day, had seen the objects of his dearest affections, and those of his deepest hostility, lie down together in the silence of the grave; and now in his reflecting mind there arose a sort of considerate pity for the whole human race; for the shortness of man's little busy career, for the weaknesses by which it is chequered, for the fleeting nature of its richest possessions, for the insignificance attending even its greatest success; but his thoughts became elevated, at last almost to sublimity, by contemplating the great capacities of good men, and the high destiny to which they are all so rapidly tending.

Done himself with the keen contentions and busy rivalries of life, Sir Richard could even spare some emotions of rather contemptuous pity to Daniel, for the sordid keenness with which that brother pursued, at every sacrifice of honour and probity, his own selfish but very transient interests; while Sir Richard felt a painful consciousness that there was no price his brother would long hesitate to pay for the obtaining of worldly profit or earthly distinction.

Sir Richard did not now anticipate much from Daniel's promised explanations, for well he remembered, with a smile of bitter retrospection,

that the more elaborately his brother explained any of his petty mysteries in old times, the longer and oftener he spoke of them, the more inexplicable they became. What, then, was it that put Mr. Brownlow now so frequently in an evident tremour of agitation? What could it be that kept Theresa in an unmistakeable state of wretchedness? What had consigned her to-day to a bed of sickness? Why was hers a state of unspoken misery which seemed evidently crushing her young heart into the very grave?

Sir Richard's meditative eye fell at this moment accidentally on the ring which had belonged to Sir Francis—which had been his own affectionate present to that murdered brother, never parted with while life remained—and his mind became more solemnly impressed than ever with the thought of what a scene that long-cherished ring once had witnessed—a scene of mystery and bloodshed, which time itself appeared never likely to elucidate, which passing years had only plunged into a deeper obscurity.

“Yet murder will out; and when did the cry of blood ever arise to heaven for vengeance without being heard?” thought Sir Richard, fixing his eyes with deep emotion on the silent portrait before him. “Am I not in some degree to blame myself for sitting down supinely here, without more diligent, searching investigation into

that fearful mystery? Long years have elapsed without one gleam of light being thrown on that darkest of crimes; but the discovery of this ring seems a providential hint sent to myself that I am neglecting a solemn duty to the memory of a kind and much-loved brother. Even that absurd rumour among the servants in this very house, that my brother's spirit haunts his old home, restlessly seeking for justice, should remind me that I, his brother, his representative, his old and much-loved companion, must not let so awful a crime be laid silently at rest for ever. Frank! my own cruelly murdered brother! your assassin, if he be yet above ground, shall be tracked out and punished. I cannot yet believe that the criminal was my old *protégé* and favourite, O'Hara; but as every tongue is loud against him, I dare not feel certain of his innocence yet. Still, men such as he, with loud and hot-headed faults, are not those who commit secret, silent, treacherous crimes. Pale-faced villains are, as Shakspeare says, the men to be feared."

While Sir Richard strolled slowly up and down, watching the clouds, listening to the wind as it howled down the chimney and shook the door on its crazy hinges, his candle unexpectedly dropped in the socket, emitting a ghastly light as it expired, and the fire, after winking and clicking for some convulsive moments in the rusty grate,

became suddenly extinguished. The dim moonlight flickered in at each window, throwing a gloomy, mournful gleam over the faded hangings and tattered fringes of the curtains. Sir Richard felt almost overawed by the midnight stillness of all around. It seemed a silence that could be felt, and his own breathing was the only audible sound, when he was suddenly startled into attention by the loud slamming of a heavy door close beside him, in what had formerly been the business-room of Sir Francis. Such an incident at this moment was perfectly unaccountable. The whole family had long retired to bed, and not the boldest servant in Mr. Brownlow's establishment would venture after daylight to approach that room; therefore what could have caused so violent a concussion? The very floor beneath his feet seemed to quiver with the shock, and Sir Richard now set his ears like a startled hare. His very eyes seemed to listen. He was, truth to say, most thoroughly alarmed!

Sir Richard, in any tangible encounter, was brave as a lion; but he had been afflicted in childhood with the misfortune of having an imaginative nurse, who then dealt deeply in whispered stories worthy of Mrs. Radcliffe. Besides the natural superstition, therefore, incident to every mortal living, especially when sitting alone in the dark at midnight, there arose to Sir Richard's

memory irresistibly all Nurse Metcalfe's early legends of skeletons rattling their chains along uninhabited passages, or looking out from behind the curtains, clothed in light, or streaming with blood, and calling in hollow accents for retribution on their assassins. That room was already full of ghostly associations, and a dim feeling of unknown horror crept shudderingly over Sir Richard's mind.

Was he about to see the wandering spirit of his brother—to hear a mysterious revelation of all he had so long desired to know—was a denunciation at last to be brought forth against the treacherous criminal who had so long eluded justice?

“The roots of his hair were stirr'd

By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd, by a whisper'd
fright.”

MAUDE.

Sir Richard had often said there were those so dear to his memory that he should not shrink from even beholding their departed spirits visibly present; but it must nevertheless be confessed that now, with a vague sensation of instinctive horror, he heard amidst the dark and dreary silence around, a slow stealthy step cautiously advancing. Every footfall became nearer, and soon after a sound attracted his notice as if hands were groping at the lock and feeling all over the door.

Must it be confessed? a cold dew broke out on Sir Richard's forehead, but he resolutely summoned up his manhood, colouring with shame and self-reproach, at being for a moment overcome by such childish superstition. He instantly rose, approached the door, quietly turned the lock with an effort of almost stern resolution, and throwing the door wide open, Sir Richard saw a sight so unexpected that he became for a moment thunderstruck, mute, and completely overwhelmed with surprise.

It was no bloody apparition from another world that met the astonished gaze of Sir Richard now, but a tall, thin, wasted-looking man, haggard in aspect, ragged in dress, famished in appearance, and emaciated with suffering. Sir Richard thought this dishevelled-looking stranger so suspicious in aspect, that he must probably have committed many a midnight robbery and stood often in the dock of the Old Bailey ; but being now convinced that this was a being of every-day flesh and blood, the Baronet felt at once restored to his self-command and presence of mind, not to be daunted by anything less than superhuman.

The gaunt-looking stranger was about hurriedly to retreat ; but Sir Richard instantly collared the terrified fugitive, and with the grasp of a giant dragged him headlong into the room, while his captive, though ghastly pale and his eyes

glistening wildly, looked on the whole much less alarmed than might have been expected at his own rather startling position, when held prisoner by Sir Richard. He unresistingly submitted to be shaken and pummelled till Sir Richard's almost delirious excitement gave way to extreme wonder that his victim, who seemed at least capable of making some resistance, attempted none whatever. A momentary pause ensued, during which the almost throttled individual, whose tightened neck-cloth required only another pull to save the hangman any further trouble, found voice and breath to say, in a tone that seemed at once familiar to the wondering ears of Sir Richard,—

“You are still the old boy, Dick Brownlow! hot and hasty! Do not, however, quite kill me,—you have more than half done it already, but wait till I have explained my business here! I thought every inch of this old house had been known to me even in the dark; but my old, besotted, crazy memory is failing, and has led me astray. I've come to the wrong room by mistake, and a lucky mistake it seems likely to prove! Sir Richard Brownlow, have you forgotten Patrick O'Hara? Who can wonder that this old, bloated, gin-destroyed carcase, appears to you unlike what it once was! I am, however, the miserable remains of that man who once owed you life itself and all that ever made life worth having.

Kill me now, my old benefactor, and that would be the kindest act my best friend could do to a ruined bankrupt in name, in fortune, in all that constitutes man."

"O'Hara!" exclaimed Sir Richard, at once relaxing his hold in a paroxysm of amazement. He then stood back fixing a gaze of regretful astonishment and compassion on the altered man, whose lip quivered like that of a sorrowful infant, and whose face became bathed in tears of anguish when he saw with what melancholy perplexity his former benefactor now regarded him. "I understood from Daniel that you had died many years since! Nothing should have prevented my finding you out, old friend, could I have guessed you were above ground! I inquired for you almost immediately on landing, and my brother protested you were dead."

"Dead drunk, perhaps!" said O'Hara, with a hard and ghastly laugh of irony, while his face became more and more haggard. "Have you never yet learned to disbelieve Mr. Daniel Brownlow? Well! no wonder; for even I had the folly to credit our old deceiver when he advised me to keep carefully out of your sight,—when he said that Sir Richard commanded me never to appear in his presence, as he believed—oh, could you believe it for one moment?—that I had been the murderer of Sir Francis. But for the blunder

that brought me to this room in mistake for the one now occupied by my ward Theresa, I might never have dared to intrude upon my benefactor. Tell me now, what lie did Mr. Brownlow tell next?"

"He declared that from the hour of my brother's murder you seemed as if haunted by the demon of intemperance," replied Sir Richard, looking earnestly at O'Hara, whose eyes dropped mournfully beneath that friendly inspection. "My brother said that you had fallen from bad to worse, that you robbed Lord Tipperary in Ireland, and were taken a guilty culprit to jail."

O'Hara stood immovable, as if under the spell of a powerful mesmerist, while Sir Richard added with an odd mixture of gravity and humour,—
"Daniel then assured me, in his usual tone of jesting on serious subjects, that you Patrick O'Hara had stood upright on a platform once in Dublin, before a great multitude of persons, made them a speech, had some earnest conversation with a clergyman, dropped your handkerchief, and then suddenly, a loose board having given way, you dropped through the aperture and were unfortunately strangled."

"May a burning brand sear the lips that uttered those words to you, Sir Richard!" exclaimed O'Hara, vehemently, "every syllable he ever speaks is an outrage on truth. If Mr. Brownlow

were not your own brother, Sir Richard, I should have no difficulty in convincing you, as I could now convince the whole world, that he deserves a halter much more than I do."

"Be on no ceremony, Patrick, about my unbrotherly brother! I am prepared for the worst," replied the Baronet with sorrowful bitterness. "There is some secret of Daniel's in this house now, that I cannot fathom—"

"And a most criminal—a most disgraceful one!" interrupted O'Hara, vehemently. "Never, till I had sworn a solemn oath to keep the plot inviolately secret, did Mr. Brownlow reveal that you had returned home, and that the scheme in which he engaged my unwilling services was against my own benefactor. I would have been torn by wild horses rather than injure you, Sir Richard; but the time for which Theresa and I promised secrecy being now expired, Mrs. Brownlow cannot persuade her to continue the deception another hour, not another moment. Daniel has locked her up, therefore, until she can be forcibly delivered this night into the custody of her Popish guardian O'Grady, who has been hurriedly sent for. I still have the master-key which Sir Francis gave me in years past, for entering these apartments, and I was groping my way now to liberate Theresa from imprisonment, and to carry her off."

“But she is ill!” interrupted Sir Richard, anxiously, “dangerously ill of typhus fever, and Mrs. Brownlow is sitting up all night in her room.”

“Mrs. Brownlow’s head is at this moment plotting a thousand schemes on her own uneasy pillow, and Theresa no more ill than you or I! Will you never learn in this house, Sir Richard, to doubt your own eyes and ears?” exclaimed O’Hara vehemently, while the Baronet continued to gaze with wondering regret at the broken-down, hollow-cheeked, white-haired wreck before him. “It is their only chance now to keep you from seeing Theresa on the pretence that she is dying, or, if you prefer it, that she is dead. That poor girl’s gratitude to you, and her extreme remorse, render it impossible for Mr. Brownlow any longer to carry on his desperate game, his most iniquitous trick.”

“What trick? Tell me all. I suspect much, but I know nothing!” interrupted Sir Richard, hurriedly. “O’Hara, be my friend now, and reveal the whole mystery. Remember old times.”

“Old times!” exclaimed the wretched man, slowly clasping his hands together, and speaking in a voice as if it came from the sepulchre, so deep in its mournful solemnity. “Oh! to be again what I once was in old, old times! The sight of you, Sir Richard, brings back the days of our merry boyhood,—our books, our dogs, our guns,

the green fields, the rolling river, the gay sunshine, and the light heart of innocent youth!" O'Hara ground his hands convulsively, with a look half crazed in its agony, and continued in a tone of increasing anguish, "Tear me limb from limb,—crush me beneath the very mountains,—hide me in the depths of the earth; but oh, take from me this seared and blighted memory!—oh, release me from the grasp of that one wretched, incurable vice which renders my wretched life a burden now, and which will at last send my soul shrieking into eternal destruction!"

A solemn pause of some moments ensued; but silent tears stood in Sir Richard's eyes, and then O'Hara, in a hoarse, low whisper, hurriedly exclaimed, "But let us not lose another moment. When I wandered here, it was in search of another room. It was to see Theresa. She is left by the servants for a few moments alone. Follow me instantly, and see whether your niece be as hopelessly ill as Mrs. Brownlow asserts. Let Theresa explain all she knows to you; for I cannot, and dare not face you to tell the disgraceful truth."

Sir Richard, in compliance with a hurried signal from O'Hara, now rose and noiselessly pursued his conductor's footsteps, along dark unfrequented passages, and up more than one flight of stairs, to the western tower. There he found himself

conveyed to the very room, in a remote corner of Torchester Abbey which had been during boyhood, his own, and where not a chair or a table seemed to have been altered since. Sir Richard felt like one walking in his sleep. Not a symptom appeared there of Mrs. Brownlow's portly person, nor of the two very attentive nurses, who were never for a moment to lose sight of Theresa; but she lay totally alone, though not asleep. The door was ajar, and he saw that she was completely dressed, on a sofa, weeping with a bitterness of anguish that melted his very heart, for she had a look of such utter and hopeless exhaustion. Her dark hair had fallen in rippling masses over the pillow, her long eyelashes were heavy with tears, and her round white arms, which might have been a study for Canova, were tossed about in restless anguish, while she moaned in accents of deep but stifled suffering.

When at length Theresa suddenly perceived Sir Richard at the door, looking at her with a degree of kindness which no countenance could express like his own, she raised herself up with a faint exclamation of welcome; the bloodless cheeks and colourless lips became once more tinged with life, and the eyes that had so often formerly avoided his, now gazed at him with a smile beaming like that of a newly awakened infant. She then addressed him in a low hollow tone, being

apparently too utterly exhausted to bear much emotion, saying,—

“I am not asleep! I never sleep! It was my only wish on earth to see you, Sir Richard, once, before I sleep the sleep of death. My heart feels already dead, my mind seems perishing in misery,—the cry of guilt rings for ever in my ears! I feel like a bad and wicked spirit driven on to destruction!”

Theresa clasped her hair in a thick veil over her face, as she wept convulsively, like a sorrowful child that had lost all self-control, and Sir Richard sitting kindly down by her side, tried by every possible device of affection to say what might best compose a mind so fearfully, so painfully agitated.

“Trust me, Theresa. Trust one whom no one ever yet repented of confiding in,” he said, in accents of serious and very deep sympathy. “Your various hints from time to time have made me guess that my brother Daniel has betrayed you into some deception. You evidently consider me the person injured; and now therefore, Theresa, believe me, when I assure you, my very dear niece, that no anger can ever arise in my mind against the child of my old companion and favourite brother Frank. You are no more to blame in this business, I am certain, than the ‘babes in the wood.’ Take courage, then, and tell me all.

I do not approve of father confessors, but let me recommend a trustworthy uncle."

The trembling girl suddenly grasped Sir Richard's arm, raised herself from the pillow, and with a mighty effort of resolution, her pale face growing scarlet from emotion, whispered in almost inaudible accents "I am not your brother's daughter! I am a vile imposter, snatched from beggary, and forced by my own guardian to act a lie. I knew not till too late the object they had in view! It seemed possible for me to do what I abhorred, till you came—till I experienced all your generous kindness, oh, how undeserved! Since then I have loathed myself,—loathed my disgraceful splendour—loathed my existence, and above all, I have loathed with unutterable disgust the vile task imposed upon me of hypocrisy and falsehood. I was taken from beggary and degradation,—yet never so degraded as now. Oh, the appalling agony of an endless remorse! Who can measure that, till they know it as I do! Honest poverty is a thousand, thousand times preferable to this!"

"To what?" asked Sir Richard, more and more bewildered with astonishment, and fixing his eyes on Theresa, as a mad doctor would do on his future patient. "My dear Theresa! all you say now is a stout impossibility, you are speaking in the delirium of fever!"

"No! no! no! Would that I were! Oh, if

I could but be delirious, or forget myself to stone ! My sister Fanny would have died a hundred deaths rather than lend herself to such a scheme. Our guardian never could have made her deceive any one,—never could have made Fanny act like a swindler, but I—I—yes ! he knew me, that I was weak, foolish,—but not so bad, as when all is told you will think me.”

Theresa dashed her head down on the arm of the sofa, and wept aloud. In another moment, however, she flung aside her tears, swallowed down her sobs, and in a hollow constrained voice tried to speak calmly. She pressed her fingers together with convulsive energy, and a cold shudder passed through her trembling frame. Her teeth chattered as in a fit of ague, and her hand became icy cold ; yet a vivid colour streamed into her face in torrents as she added, “ My conscience all this time would for ever speak out and reproach me. Sleepless nights and anxious days have brought me down almost to the dust of death. I need no longer be their guilty tool, for the time of my promise is fulfilled. Let O’Grady shut me up in a convent, as I fear he intends ; but neither threats nor promises can ever again influence me to deceive. Providence has sent you here this night, Sir Richard, to learn the truth. You alone are the rightful owner of this house ! ”

“ Impossible, my dear girl ! Quite impossible !

I see every feature of my brother Frank in your countenance. I hear the peculiarly harmonious intonations of poor Evelyn's voice. Nothing shall persuade me that you are not their child; Daniel always kept truth at the bottom of a very deep well, and broke the rope that should haul it up; but there is some extraordinary deceit played upon us all now! The whole world since I came home seems like a great puppet-show; but this very strange masquerading is so like Daniel's crooked ways!"

"Crooked indeed!" sighed Theresa despondingly, "and none more to blame than I."

"My remembrance of your childhood, my dear girl, cannot have deceived me. Those merry elfish eyes which, even during your infancy, were not to be matched in the world, except by your own mother's! How proud she was of my two small nieces, of her little brunette, and of Fanny, our fair young blonde; so gentle, so wise, so amiable even then. She was much too good for my taste, much too good for this evil world! Do I not remember both children looking as if you wanted only wings to be cherubs? Every turn of your head, Theresa, every shake of your ringlets reminds me of your own mother who was very dear and kind to me."

"I am glad she was! Who could be otherwise?" exclaimed Theresa, looking up with a reassured

smile; "but I must not, dare not, hope for all this to be real. I listen to you with both joy and terror! I am quite afraid to awake and find myself dreaming. Oh, if I could but find Fanny again to share evil or good honestly with her as God pleases, but still to be together! I have caused every search to be made; but in vain. Since my conscience is unburdened by confessing all to you, I feel as if beggary itself might be more endurable than what I have suffered lately. I could be a sewing-machine once more, and work myself blind, only to feel honest, and to be again beside Fanny. Then I could pray and feel comforted; but on the slippery eminence of guilt and deceit, I suffered the continual gnawing of remorse which was gradually killing me. Every kindness you showed me, Sir Richard,—and oh, how many they were!—stung me to the very heart; but now I can look you in the face with free open-hearted gratitude, feeling that at least you know the worst, and that still you have forgiven me."

"We must find your sister. O'Hara declares that a danger threatens you both, if you and Fanny are legally identified. That you would become the property of Popish guardians fraudulently appointed, and that he dare not reveal your parentage even to yourselves, because you may soon be put upon oath in a court of justice as to what you both know of your own origin. For that

reason he does not explicitly tell me ; for the same reason he conceals much even from Mrs. O'Hara," said Sir Richard musingly ; "but nothing can deceive me as to your identity. From this hour you are my adopted child ; niece or daughter, no matter which, you are from henceforth provided for, and Fanny must be found. Your mind being now at ease, and perfect confidence established between us, Theresa, let me see you from henceforth as the young ought to be—happy. You are the legal owner of this house, or I am. In either case, I have a whim that we shall act this farce out to-morrow in the characters that Daniel has cast for us, though the *dénoûment*, now that I am become stage manager, may not be precisely what he expects. Let us ascertain who in my brother's family are knowingly partakers in this very swindling scheme,—whether Anne is aware of it,—"

"Oh, no!" interposed Theresa, warmly ; "she is utterly, utterly incapable——"

"True! she has no more mind than a baby ; therefore no mortal would ever entrust her with any part to act. But I must have a peep into Daniel's scene-shifting," said Sir Richard, with a grave smile. "He has always been a living lie, and must be detected by some device of mine. I never in my life did anything like anybody else. nor have I in that respect reformed now."

At this moment O'Hara entered hurriedly, grasped the arm of Sir Richard in silence, and leading him to a window in the adjoining room, pointed out, by the dim and struggling light of the moon, which wrestled through an army of opposing clouds in its glorious course, a carriage which stood waiting at the door, while the coachman, evidently tired of long waiting, leaned back sleeping on the box.

Footsteps now advanced hastily along the passage, and O'Grady, passing close to where Sir Richard and O'Hara stood concealed in the embrasure by a heavy curtain, proceeded towards the door of Theresa's room, which he opened, saying, in harsh, peremptory accents, "Come, then! we have no time to lose! You are now to be placed at our convent, in a happier home than you have ever yet known—happier far than you deserve. Sir Richard last night detected your whole imposition, and he is furious. Nothing but Mrs. Brownlow's assurance that you are dangerously ill of an infectious fever prevented his rushing up to reproach you in the bitterest terms. Never was there anger like his. Be thankful to have a place where you can hide your guilty head from his vengeance. Do not hope to move Sir Richard's pity, for he left this house instantly on discovering your wicked fraud. In our convent, however, you shall be safe from every foe; and if you can be

proved the daughter of Sir Francis, then stay, as in filial duty bound, under the guardianship of those to whom his last will consigned you."

"He never did!—never!" exclaimed Theresa, resolutely. "My guardian has frequently warned me that such a claim as yours might one day be made on me; but it is false—false! My feet shall grow into the floor before I move one step towards any Popish prison such as that to which you would consign me for life; and it is utterly untrue that any one but yourself ever wished to place me there."

"Did I not show you, when we met in Ireland, a sufficient proof?" answered O'Grady, in the cold, restrained voice with which he could generally conceal any violent emotion. "Did I not secretly show you, in Ireland, the very ring that Sir Francis gave me on the morning previous to his death, to show Lady Brownlow, as a proof of his having consigned her children to me?"

"That ring!" exclaimed O'Hara, bursting into the room, with a cry of almost savage joy—"you confess to having possessed that ring! At last, O'Grady, I am your master! I have watched for this discovery—waited, almost prayed for it. I never awoke to any other hope for years; I never lay down with any other consolation, but that I might one day throw on you the burden of your own guilt. This was the only link wanting to

a long chain of evidence which I have gathered for years against you—against the cold-blooded murderer of Sir Francis—against the man, or devil, who fastened on me the accusation of his own crime. That chain of evidence has grown around you, link by link, for ages; but now the halter is completed—the rope is woven!”

At the first sound of O'Hara's voice, O'Grady started as if he had received a galvanic shock; and when O'Hara clutched his arm with the grasp of a vice, the wretched man's wonderful cunning refused this once to aid him. He wore now the look of a baffled fiend, while his pale lips seemed hardening into marble; and yet there was a gleam from his eyes, like forked lightning, which betrayed, as he glanced at O'Hara, what a smothered fire raged within. Those snake-like eyes had in them a strange, dilated, lurid light, while he continued to stare at O'Hara, as if there had been fascination in that unwinking gaze. The damp dew glistened on his pallid brow, when at length the almost delirious O'Hara continued, in accents that grew shrill from excitement, saying, “Earth cannot hide your crime any longer! The ground has been undermined, inch by inch, under your feet, O'Grady; and now you have fallen into a gulf of irretrievable ruin. For twelve years I have laboured ceaselessly to lay on the true assassin that guilt you threw on me. At last I am

successful. Heaven heard my vow to be revenged, and earth recorded it. I can prove all now. My heart has burned for years in hope of this moment's revenge. It may be madness—it is a wild feeling of justice too—but the injury you did me was deeper than life itself. It withered every blossom that might have adorned my path of life; and all that I ever suffered, you shall suffer. If ever man felt like a fiend, I do now; for your despair is a balm to my wretched soul. The attempt to find you has been the master-passion and the master-torment of my life. For twelve long years, owing to your machinations, I have cursed my own existence. My life has been one ceaseless trial of patience, waiting, and watching for this hour. It has been a race between us, O'Grady, and I have won. Your game is up for ever and ever!"

O'Hara burst into a loud, wild, protracted laugh, that rung through the room like that of a maniac; while O'Grady glanced round with an aspect of undefined horror; an expression of gaping, half-crazed terror and a long shuddering groan forced itself from between his quivering lips. Then O'Hara exclaimed, in accents that sounded like increasing insanity, while his words came forth as if ground to fragments between his clenched teeth—"Yes, O'Grady, your feelings have been for years like a toad in a stone, hiding their loathsomeness within a cold and torpid tomb; but now

they will force themselves to be heard. All the cardinals in Rome cannot absolve you from being punished by Protestant law for murder. Confess all, then, at once. The long chain of your deceits is ended. Confess to me. I give you ten minutes for consideration."

"Ten thousand would make no difference," replied O'Grady, gloomily; but never was there a more death-like aspect in a living face. He looked like a man suddenly congealed; and as if in these few moments he had withered, shrunk, become suddenly old and decrepit. At this moment Sir Richard, having come noiselessly out from behind the curtain, stood in dim shadow, where O'Grady indistinctly saw his face ghastly in the pallid moonlight. Confused already, terrified and bewildered, his otherwise powerful mind prostrated into superstition about Popish visions, waxen images, and winking pictures, he suddenly uttered a prolonged and terrific shriek, and sprang forward in an attitude of strong undefined terror, exclaiming, "He is come! he is come from the grave! The dead have returned to life! Give me any earthly realities, and I can face them; but not that fearful vision. I am trapped, ensnared, caught, haunted! My senses will forsake me!"

O'Grady paused, riveted his hands over his face, and with a chilly shudder sunk down perfectly collapsed on a seat, muttering in accents of

agony to himself, without daring again to look up,—

“ Stretched on a rack of torture for years, a single touch will rend my mind to madness! Long has that viewless spectre beset my thoughts, dogged my steps, disturbed my very dreams. Father Ambrose assured me that confession would lay that spirit! I have confessed again, and again, and again; but no peace has followed! For still my crime stands before me, face to face. What have I to do with peace? Who talks of absolution for an assassin? Mercy! pardon! hope! Alas! none of these are for me! Nothing but endless despondency! The avenger of blood is pursuing me with ceaseless vigilance, and now the mine is sprung under my very feet. He is there! The pale distorted face of Sir Francis follows me everywhere. Among a thousand dark, vague, horrid thoughts, the white face of a corpse, ghastly in the moonlight, is for ever before me, stretched at my feet, or pursuing me as I go; his clothes saturated with blood, his dark hair blowing in the night wind, his dead eyes staring as when I saw him that night. The very heavens seem red with his blood!”

When O’Grady at last looked up once more there sounded now, for the first time, in his trembling voice, something of human feeling, of human fear, and of human anguish, as he suddenly

became aware that no unearthly vision was before him; but recognised the grave, mournful, and composed features of Sir Richard. His breathing continued thick and oppressed, however, while his pallid brow became damp with large drops of moisture, as with a look of abject misery he turned away from one whom in better days he had respected and loved. A flood of old remembrances rushed into his memory, and he burst into tears, sobbing in a state of passionate agony as he stretched out his lean arm, and exclaimed in a voice so utterly changed that it was scarcely to be recognised,—

“In mercy shoot me through the brain, Richard Brownlow! you were good and generous formerly; release me from the grasp of an enemy to whom my agony is a subject of derision, my very despair his greatest joy. My spirit quails before this man’s withering presence. Oh, release me! For years, Sir Richard, like one leaning dizzily over a precipice who longs to throw himself over, I have felt a haunting desire to deliver myself up before a magistrate. Yet now——. Oh! it is fearful to be thus hunted down, insulted, dragged forth publicly to justice! Hide me, oh earth! Hide me in the grave!”

“Dry your hypocritical eyes!” said O’Hara, with a look stern as death itself; and he shook O’Grady in his grasp like a rat in the clutches of

a terrier. "Do not these very walls tremble to contain the assassin? Is not your crime written there in characters of blood? Does not the very floor shake beneath your feet? Does not murder entail its own punishment now, as well as hereafter? but Sir Francis may rest at peace in his bloody grave, for your black and horrid treason against his life can be proved. There shall be life for life and blood for blood. You are caught at last, like a harpooned whale, and I am not the man to let you go."

A low groan, as of one on the rack, burst from O'Grady, and the blood rushed curdling to his heart, leaving him like a breathing corpse, while he turned anxiously round and gazed at Sir Richard, as if he saw in him the judge about to pronounce sentence.

"I long since secured the sheets of paper on which you practised how to imitate the signature of Sir Francis," continued O'Hara with rising exultation, while he seemed to grow visibly larger as he spoke in wild accents of triumph. "You have no more hold of your own life now, O'Grady, than of the blast howling in the forest. The proofs of your guilt shall be emblazoned before the world in characters of fire; and now, in the presence of Sir Richard Brownlow, I formally denounce you as the assassin of his brother. Let outraged justice be satisfied, Sir Richard, for the

hell-born crime ! Let the bolt of vengeance overtake O'Grady, if I were to die the next hour. Often have I said that the same world could not contain us both, and he shall plunge over the precipice now, surrounded by the cursings of all mankind ! ”

O'Grady's face looked hideously ghastly now ; for a horrible sensation of fear had taken possession of his miserable soul ; but the sight of such wretchedness was—must it be told ?—a feast to the eyes of O'Hara, who now dragged him towards the door of a well-secured iron-bound closet, in which Sir Francis used formerly to keep his charter-chest and papers. There O'Grady had often, during past years, been shut up for hours in conference with his deceased benefactor, and there they had spent together, in transacting business, the last evening before he was murdered. When O'Grady perceived the intention of O'Hara to secure him for the night there, he uttered a shriek that made every heart become chilled with horror, and struggled with ghastly vigour to escape. O'Grady's mind, so long kneaded up in bigotry, and sunk in doating superstitions, had lately been haunted by imaginary terrors ; but O'Hara's lynx-eyed watchfulness anticipated every movement of his victim, who exclaimed in a voice of terrified earnestness, as he found himself irresistibly thrust towards the door, while his features became dragged and distorted with terror,—

“Not there!—not there! Help me, Sir Richard! Anywhere but here! I cannot breathe; I cannot live here! Take me to prison; cast me on a dungeon-floor; hurry me to death itself; but help me, Sir Richard, keep me from this place, for it is like the scene of some fearful, fearful dream!”

Though Sir Richard, unwilling that horror should be added to horror, attempted now to interfere, O'Hara, who appeared to have the strength of ten men, recklessly flung the trembling wretch into the farthest recess of that silent dark and solitary room. There O'Grady sank down in a heap upon the ground, completely collapsed, and groaning as if in bodily torture. Bitter and scornful was the smile with which O'Hara saw the prisoner toss his despairing arms aloft, as he closed the door, while the wretched criminal writhed with agony, and gnashed his teeth with impotent fury. O'Hara carefully secured the small iron-grated window, and having locked and double-locked the door as jealously as if through any unguarded cranny or key-hole the culprit might escape like a stream of air, he put the key triumphantly in his pocket. With frenzied transport he then hurried off in search of a constable, taking three steps at a time downstairs, and rapidly traversing the park, as if endowed with wings, in the speed with which he flew towards Brentford to summon the police.

O'Grady might be heard all that night pacing the cell with measured steps ; but sometimes they became fiercely accelerated as he felt himself now dragged face to face with the long dreaded danger of conviction as a murderer ; and he could not for an instant close his eyes against the impending certainty of being manacled in a prison cell, and publicly executed, amidst the execrations of mankind.

As a posse of police led O'Grady next morning into Brentford jail, a mob of idle gazers looked on ; but O'Hara checked every rising emotion of sympathy towards the well-guarded prisoner, who looked already withered to a perfect spectre, by saying in loud distinct accents, " He is a murderer ! "

At these fearful words all stood back aghast, while the spectators whispered from mouth to mouth in awe-struck accents, " Murder ! " O'Hara, when he saw the effect produced by this announcement, had a gleam of fearful triumph in his eye. His whole figure seemed to dilate. He was a sight to look at !

From that time a paragraph appeared daily in every London newspaper, which no one in club or breakfast-room ever omitted to look for, headed " The Brentford Murder." O'Grady's appearance, habits, ways, thoughts, opinions, previous life, looks, and conversation, became a subject of the

most exciting interest. What the “unfortunate man” ate or drank was recorded. Gentlemen went to visit him. Ladies sent him bouquets. His confession was looked for with the most intense anxiety, and an interesting likeness of him appeared in “The Illustrious News.”

“Ah, Fear ! ah, frantic Fear !

I see—I see thee near ;

I know thy hurried step—thy haggard eye :

Like thee I start, like thee disorder’d fly.”

COLLINS.

CHAPTER X.

“ I am

A simple woman : much too weak to oppose

Your cunning. You are humble mouth'd,

..... but your heart

Is cramm'd with arrogance.”

SHAKSPEARE.

IF the Diable Boiteux could have unroofed Torchester Abbey that night, those who were spectators might have imagined Theresa and Sir Richard father and daughter ; sitting side by side so greatly did they resemble each other, and so entirely confidential were the terms in which they now had placed themselves. Hours elapsed, during which Theresa, in a tone of much perplexity, but with a look of entire frankness, as well as of heartfelt penitence, gave a full narrative to Sir Richard of all her past life, including especially the deceit she had so unwillingly practised ; while with tears of agonizing self-reproach she gratefully received his pardon.

“ Your resemblance to my brother is so obvious, that I have no hesitation in believing O'Hara's hints, which he dare not yet confirm, that you are indeed what he persuaded you to pretend. That

you are the very child I loved here as an infant, it is impossible to doubt," observed Sir Richard, earnestly. "I should indeed be sorry not to credit that fact! All the acres in Middlesex are less precious to me than the possession of a kind young niece to love me in my maturer years. Though not yet much above thirty, yet I anticipate that the dregs of human life are at best a bitter draught, Theresa; I feel, therefore, that the sympathy and affection of a kind young relative who could love me might become far more than wealth or property to one who cares but little for either. The friendly affections of life are to me, and always have been, more than life itself. In those that were deepest and dearest I had an early disappointment, that seemed to make me grow old in a day."

Morning shone out at last, bright and beautiful as June could make it, when Sir Richard, feeling it would be impossible for either of the agitated party to rest, or to attempt any occupation, having looked at his watch, found it had already struck six o'clock. He proposed, therefore, to Theresa, who sat with her hand in his, pale, trembling, and still very much exhausted, beside an open window, that they should take a stroll in the park to admire the rising sun, as well as to hear the birds carol their morning hymn of praise and joy. This proposal she most gladly acceded

to, anxious, if possible, to dissipate the painful impression of the scene between O'Hara and O'Grady, in which she had so recently and most unwillingly been a partaker. She delighted, also, in having a continued opportunity of conversing with that kindest of friends, Sir Richard. Theresa could now, with her usual frankness of heart, and freshness of feeling, pour out to so benevolent and generous a listener the whole tide of her feelings and long-repressed emotions; while it was with a deep sigh of infinite relief that she at length exclaimed, after they had walked together during some time,—

“Now all is told—all! You have nobly forgiven me, Sir Richard; nobly and generously; but I never can forgive myself—never!”

“You must not speak too severely of a young penitent, a very great favourite of mine, who has been most deeply tried,” answered Sir Richard, kindly smiling, as Theresa turned away to hide the starting tears that had sprung into her eyes. “Let me petition for an act of oblivion. A certain little niece of mine can do no wrong; or at least if she does, the india rubber of repentance has expunged it entirely from my memory. Theresa! you and I have both been surrounded in a net woven by the deceit and crimes of others; but in this case you were far more sinned against than sinning.”

At this moment a little low phaeton, drawn by one grey pony, and driven with very skilful care by a lady, while another, somewhat younger, sat by her side, came whirling up the Torchester approach. The groom who accompanied it on horseback had opened a gate to let the small equipage pass through, when suddenly one of the occupants, having looked for a moment at Theresa, gave a cry of joyful recognition, sprang lightly as a young greyhound out of the tiny carriage, and locked the startled Theresa in a rapturous embrace, exclaiming, in accents that trembled with delight,—

“ My own dear, dear sister ! My own Theresa ! have I found you at last ? ”

Fanny hung round the neck of her newly-restored sister in a perfect paroxysm of joy and of rapturous exclamations, while Theresa continued during some moments overwhelmed in silent, trembling ecstasy. It seemed as if Fanny, between laughing and weeping, could have cried or danced for joy,—as if she were almost delirious with rapture ; but suddenly her eye fell on the handsome beaming countenance of Sir Richard, smilingly looking on with benevolent pleasure at a scene of so much happiness, and her countenance changed to an expression of grave apprehension, of passionate earnestness, as she whispered, in trembling anxiety, to Theresa,—

“Tell me—oh, tell me at once, dear sister—is all well and right with you? Who is that stranger?”

“No stranger, Fanny, but the kindest and best of benefactors,” answered Theresa, with affectionate emotion. “Words cannot express what I owe him! There lives not on earth any mortal more grateful, more indebted to another than I am to Sir Richard Brownlow.”

Emily Plantagenet had been attending only to the joyful meeting of these two long-attached sisters, so touching to a heart like hers; but that name—that long-cherished name—fell on her ears now as no other sound could have done, causing her to start, and turn hastily round. An unwonted colour burned on Emily’s cheek; an unusual brightness illuminated her eyes; she trembled with unwonted emotion, and looked with an expression of hesitating uncertainty at Sir Richard. There, then, stood the first and only man who had ever gained a place in her early affections, whose memory had been cherished there ever since; whose unaccountable departure had consigned her for years to all the unspoken sorrow of an unrequited attachment.

Scarcely had Miss Plantagenet glanced at him for a moment, before Sir Richard, with an exclamation of inexpressible astonishment and joy, sprang forward and seized her hand, saying in accents of unmistakeable delight,—

“Can this be possible? Am I so happy as once more to meet Emily Plantagenet? Say that you are glad to welcome back an old friend—more than a friend. Do not tell me that you have forgotten Richard Brownlow.”

“I never excelled in forgetting old friends,” answered Emily, timidly. She seemed, during a short moment, almost ready to faint; but, quickly recovering herself, advanced with a frank and cordial smile, saying,—“Nor can I pretend it would be possible for me ever to forget you!”

Sir Richard again grasped the extended hand of Miss Plantagenet with a look of intense and almost solemn emotion, while she, her eyes cast on the ground, trembled visibly. Both remained for several minutes silent. It was a silence that spoke. It was the silence of most ardent feeling. Emily’s lip quivered with speechless emotion; while Sir Richard’s fine manly countenance had become pale as death. Yet, when he looked at Emily, his eye gradually brightened with an expression of hope. His voice was at length restored, and it assumed a new tone of sensibility and unwonted hopefulness, as he exclaimed, with fervour,—

“Have I been cheated by Daniel in this, as in all things? Tell me, Emily, that you were indeed inviolably faithful to one who never loved—never could love any one individual but yourself? Your smile allows me to hope! Can it be? This,

then, is what I have despaired of, yet longed for with my whole heart these many long years,—what Daniel had persuaded me was impossible. How seldom is such happiness allotted to any living mortal. It makes me a boy again, to see you, Emily, once more ! To see you looking as you do now ! ”

It appeared, indeed, as if Sir Richard were again only twenty, and Emily sixteen. All the romance of youth seemed revived at once for both, and all the misapprehensions of their earlier years to have cleared off, like fog before the bright sunshine of so much felicity. Emily long remained silent, however, summoning courage evidently to speak, but words would not come at her bidding. Meanwhile, her countenance spoke enough to show how pleasingly she was agitated, when Sir Richard hurriedly led her towards a noble old oak-tree, the branches of which now overshadowed their path.

“Here, Emily,” he said, in accents of the deepest tenderness ; “what name is engraved on this venerable trunk ? Ages have elapsed since I carved it there ; but the impression has become deeper with every added year ; and so it has been with your image on my heart. Neither time, nor death itself, could efface that from my best affections.”

After a pause of several minutes, during which

Sir Richard waited anxiously for a reply, Emily almost whispered, as if thinking aloud,—

“We meet now in cordial friendship, like a long-attached brother and sister.”

“No! impossible!—I never can be a mere brother to Emily Plantagenet. I shall wish there were no such relationship on earth!” exclaimed Sir Richard, earnestly. “Can you be no more to me, Emily, when I declare that every hope of happiness in my future life depends on your taking a place far dearer to me than any sister’s. I cannot recollect the time when first I began to love you. The delight of doing so stole insensibly on my boyhood like daylight, and has shone steadily on me yet as my day-star in every changing scene of life. You shall be the best part of my existence. You could not desire to be loved more fervently than you are; for every thought of my heart has been yours, in sorrow, in joy, or in pain, since we parted.”

“We were deceived by many cruel falsehoods,” answered Emily, in a low, quivering whisper, and a deep flush mantled on her cheek. “Neither of us are to blame. Both have suffered deeply. But it is too late, Sir Richard; you cannot restore the freshness of summer to an autumn leaf. Think of the difference, as Mademoiselle used to say, between ‘une jeune femme et une femme encore jeune!’

‘Ah, yes! with me Love’s smiles are past,
Thou hadst the first, thou hadst the last.’

The long shadows of evening are already over my path of life, and," added she, looking up with a smile of almost angelic expression; "I have grown old and ugly."

"Not to me, Emily! Not if your years were a hundred,—not while you look so like your former beautiful self. We were but boy and girl when a malignant falsehood parted us; and now we have but entered on the prime of our days, when every feeling of nature is matured into perfection. Are not the flowers of autumn brighter far than those of spring and summer? Should you reject me, Emily, my winter is indeed come, and my every hope withered! Our separation formerly seemed the uprooting of life itself to me. I have learned fully to value such domestic happiness as we may yet enjoy, in Darby-and-Joan fashion together, more permanently than in our more romantic days. A home with you would be an earthly paradise, in which to brighten all life's faded flowers. Ever since we separated, I have lived on the past. May I not hope now for a joyful future,—for a renewal of old times, when such a meeting as this was all the happiness, during life, that I ever desired."

Emily looked up, through blinding tears, with a smile that had in it all the radiant happiness of her earliest girlhood. She turned away, but held out her trembling hand to him, which he rapturously clasped in his own, exclaiming,—

“ At last ! at last, then, my best hope in life is realized ! Emily, we shall be happier than happy now. I scarcely knew how very dear you were to me till this moment, when we belong entirely to each other, and I find that never before did either of us know the real meaning of that one word felicity.”

While Sir Richard's words poured out like a rushing flood, Emily listened with downcast eyes and burning cheeks. Large tears rolled, one by one, down her face, dropping unheeded on the ground ; while Sir Richard, with fervid, manly eloquence, related the whole past history of his heart. Before he concluded, hours fled swiftly away ; and Emily soon forgot to feel old or ugly, while the lover of her early girlhood repeated again and again the welcome protestation, which could scarcely be too often reiterated, that he saw no alteration ; that if there were any change, it was decidedly for the better.

“ One knows, as a general fact, that all the world is getting into the vale of years,” he added, in reply to Emily's very last remark on that subject. “ As yet, at not much more than thirty, let me flatter myself that time has only improved us both—that we have each had a dip in Medea's cauldron ; but the unwelcome day must at last come, of course, when those who live long enough are no longer young ; when the rising generation

will be rudely pushing us off our stools ; when you and I shall be gazing anxiously round in society to see if there be any one present as old as ourselves ; when I may be startled to perceive those we remember infants wearing long frocks and cockades, at length promoted to military uniforms ; when my own cotemporaries shall haunt our path, tottering along in wig and spectacles, and when I shall be considered a mere old bore myself, encumbering the highway of life. Let us but walk down the hill together, Emily, and then every step of the long highway will seem to me bathed in sunshine.

‘ But drear is the twilight of age, if it borrow

No warmth from the smiles of wife, children, and friends.’ ”

Sir Richard drew Emily’s not unwilling arm within his own, saying, in his usual tone of cheerful hilarity,—

“ It will be a ceaseless interest for us hereafter to talk over all that has occurred, and all that has not occurred since we were treacherously parted. In my solitary hours abroad, I used to moralize on human life, as being for inscrutable, though very wise reasons, one scene of endless disappointment. In its course, even the few pleasures we enjoy have a shadow invariably accompanying them ; and that shadow is always darker and darker in proportion to the brightness it follows. The sunniest gleam

on my path of life was my love for you, and how black the shadow that extinguished all hope !”

“ Nothing in all our mysterious existence on earth strikes me so forcibly as to observe how invariably there is a hand stretched out between every living mortal and the object of his most ardent, of his most peculiar wishes,” answered Emily, thoughtfully. “ One man, when apparently on the eve of a perfect success, loses his fortune ; another his health ; another his reputation ; another his children ; but every individual has some great calamity to deplore, and generally the very last he would choose. I never knew any one yet who had not also made some one grand blunder in his life, which he lamented for ever after. Your blunder was, the rushing away from home as you did, without giving poor me a chance of explaining that neither my good, kind father nor I had any implacable antipathy towards you.”

“ Then I deserved all my sufferings,” replied Sir Richard vehemently. “ In my disappointment formerly, I remember one day comparing the progress of human life to that of a wasp upon a window. The poor ill-conditioned insect sees every unattainable pleasure of life outside, and tries in vain to get at them. Sometimes he struggles vehemently, and becomes violently excited, in the hopeless attempt to reach what he wants. On other occasions he patiently walks up and

down the barrier, trying more composedly to attain his much-desired object. Then for a moment he flies away, as I did, all rage and despair, through all space, abandoning the pursuit. Then he returns with fresh vigour to the attack ; but all ends at last in disappointment and death. It must not be so with us, however, Emily, now ! Let us hope that in the kind providence of God we are destined to be happy in this life, while preparing together for a yet happier hereafter,—

‘ Ah ! still I must love thee,
Remember thy truth,
And cherish more fondly
The dreams of our youth.

‘ In vain they would sever
Thy name from my heart ;
I have loved thee too well,
Now we never shall part ! ’”

CHAPTER XI.

“This vile world and I have long been jangling, and cannot part on better terms than now.”

Venice Preserved.

WHEN the trial of O’Grady took place, a mob, never exceeded in number on any such previous occasion, poured like a roaring torrent into the court of justice, till in three minutes after the doors were opened it became full to suffocation. The tumultuous crowd swayed about like a forest in an autumn gale, while they elbowed each other, groaning aloud and waving their arms in a state of half-jesting excitement, more fit for a cock-fight or a bull-bait than for an occasion when human life was at stake.

O’Grady, in his cell, had been roused with difficulty from a deep, almost death-like sleep, such as that in which criminals are so often found on the eve of execution, and which is mistaken for a peaceful slumber. O’Grady’s was a fearful awakening to consciousness, as the realities around him were appalling indeed. It seemed to him a mere galvanized life, when starting from utter unconsciousness, he remembered how soon and how

certainly he must sink back into the insensibility of death itself.

“Who has not felt, from senseless sleep awaking,
Oppression of some ill the mind cannot recal,
Till, the stern truth upon the memory breaking,
We madly wish we ne’er had waked at all?”

O’Hara on the preceding day had been so impatient to see O’Grady’s condemnation, that his principal fear evidently was whether to-morrow might never come. When at length, however, he stood in the witness-box, the factor’s almost delirious triumph seemed suddenly to subside into a state of painful reaction, so that he felt in a moment how inferior is the fruition of our hope to its anticipation.

“Surely,” thought he, “it must be better to find out the fallacy of our wishes by gaining than by losing our desire; yet who can look on the unutterable wretchedness of my worst enemy, crouching there in terror, while a hundred un-pitying eyes are frowning upon him, and death pursuing in his track, without one relenting wish such as I now feel, that even he, that monster of iniquity, could be pardoned!”

As O’Grady was conveyed through the street, the life-blood seemed to have fled from his cheeks for ever, while his ears were assailed by loud hooting and execrations, which might have made a bolder man quail, and after he was placed at the bar, the snake-like expression of the prisoner’s

eyes made him no friends among the many who filled the justice room. The wretched criminal looked at first in a state of passive agony, as if he would willingly have sunk in the earth, and hid himself for ever there. While the groaning and yelling continued outside, O'Grady in desperation plunged his face into his hands, but never did any one who saw it, afterwards forget the expression of agonized terror with which he did so. When he looked up again, a dark red spot burned on both cheeks, but he endeavoured to assume a cold, defiant, stern expression, and after a visible effort, became at length rigidly calm as he generally was, contemplating with a leaden eye the sea of faces around him as coolly and deliberately as if the whole scene had been only depicted in a book, which he was deliberately reading. There were spectators among the crowd chatting together now in pleasant whispers, others lounging on the benches lost in thought or lost in sleep; and a multitude close beside the criminal of hot, dusty faces, burning with excited curiosity to watch every variation of his mental agony, and that was great indeed; so great that even O'Hara covered his face from beholding it.

“ There's mercy in each ray of light
That mortal eyes ere saw;
There's mercy in each breath of air
That mortal lip can draw;

“There’s mercy for both bird and beast
In God’s indulgent plan ;
There’s mercy in each creeping thing—
Shall man have none for man ?”

What mortal does not sympathise with a fellow-mortal struggling in the very grasp of death ? But pity was speedily quenched in surprise at the marvellous self-command soon exhibited by the long-practised O’Grady, who had not studied so long in the Jesuit school of counterfeit immovability, to be driven entirely from his anchorage by the first adverse gale. After a few moments’ contest with his yet lingering emotions of human nature, O’Grady looked up at the bench and at the jury-box with as passive an aspect as if he had been a painter’s lathe or an Egyptian mummy. The criminal alone, among all present, seemed now totally unconcerned as to what might transpire, for he looked like a soulless, pulseless image ; while with a dull, vacant eye, which expressed only indolent stupor, he seemed absently counting the rails by which the bar was surrounded, and absently watching a sparrow careering round the ceiling. The culprit coldly denied every accusation, assuming a look of utter amazement and of injured innocence, whenever any of the evidence told against him, and he related his own past history in slow, measured language, as if he were the most faultless of living mortals, and

as if his only weakness in life had been his friendship for O'Hara. O'Grady's references in respect to character, testifying how trustworthy he had always been in the discharge of a thousand miscellaneous occupations, included every name most eminently connected with his own superstition. The Cardinal of Hammersmith appeared personally on the prisoner's behalf; and Lord Tipperary, as well as many of the most exalted names in Ireland, testified to his perfect integrity.

Conflicting opinions of O'Grady's guilt or innocence were keenly discussed in an undertoned whisper by the crowded spectators, while to many the singularly calm exterior of the accused seemed as if it lent him all the dignity of conscious virtue. A hum of eager voices buzzed through the assembly in a low, impressive murmur, until the magistrate, in a voice of command, ordered silence. Then the increasing solemnity around the court became most oppressive, while each spectator became silent as death, attentive, and keenly anxious. The jury had an aspect of most intense seriousness, appropriate to men on whose opinion the life of a trembling fellow-creature depended; the counsel on both sides braced up their minds for a brilliant display of their legal powers; and O'Hara had once more become angrily resolute after hearing O'Grady's plausible deposition, so evidently intended to inculcate him in the murder of Sir Francis Brownlow.

A stranger might now have imagined O'Grady the only person present totally unconcerned. He assumed no bravado, having evidently passed that point of feeling where sensation is possible; but he looked round in the dock, apparently calm, passive, and perfectly collected. Nevertheless O'Hara saw when his own evidence began that the veins in O'Grady's forehead stood out like whip-cord, his teeth were clenched over his livid lip, a death-like chill ran through his whole body, his face became rigid as that of a corpse, and the riveting hold with which he clutched the bar before him, betrayed the intensity of his agonized suspense.

The counsel for the prosecution had minutely and most circumstantially narrated every incident connected with the murder of Sir Francis, and a deep, hoarse groan ran through the assembled crowd after it seemed to be concluded. When O'Hara was at length summoned to speak, there ensued a hush of breathless attention, while he stood forth in the witness-box to detail with masterly eloquence the long chain of blighting evidence, which he had been for twelve years so ceaselessly endeavouring to complete; and now the indignant audience for the first time learned how ruthlessly the prisoner had attempted to commit a double murder by endeavouring to fasten the blame of his own treacherous crime on another.

There is a force in real truth not to be resisted. All present who saw the fierce delight of O'Hara

while unravelling the inscrutable mystery which had hitherto shrouded those mysterious circumstances attending the murder of Sir Francis, and the production of his suppositious will, felt a dark foreboding that now the whole odious skein of O'Grady's crimes would at last be unravelled by his clever and most eloquent antagonist. O'Hara concluded his long and perfectly unquestionable evidence by saying in a low, concentrated tone of suppressed vehemence, while his eyes became fastened on the prisoner,—

“It seems an abuse of language to call Terence O'Grady a human being! It is marvellous that he still retains the lineaments of a man. Oh that I, whom you tempted into the ruinous vice of intoxication in order to drive me into exile, misery and disgrace, could lift up the veil that conceals all your black-hearted crimes. Oh that I could show to this assembled multitude, as I imagine it myself, the last fearful hour of Sir Francis Brownlow's life! The entire confidence my benefactor placed during that fatal walk in his companion, while they proceeded in friendly association through the forest,—the hurried onset of his treacherous murderer, the musket so instantaneously discharged, the shriek of mortal agony, the heavy fall, the gasping agony, the struggling breath, and the final groan of that noble victim, so dear to my memory, so cruelly betrayed! Yes,” added

O'Hara, fixing his blazing eye on O'Grady, with a penetrating gaze not to be evaded, and which pierced into his very soul, "there stands the murderer of Sir Francis Brownlow!"

O'Grady's very looks could not deny the accusation. His quivering lips parted; but the faint words fell dead from his paralysed voice—yet he did at last, by an irresistible impulse of nature exclaim, "It is all true!—too true! I am—"

O'Grady fell forward insensible. A glass of water being quickly passed, however, from hand to hand until it reached the fainting culprit, he was at length restored to consciousness, and sat up, while one mighty irrepressible sigh burst from his very soul. His cheek had become of a dull leaden white, and his blood-shot eyes gleamed on O'Hara with a look of intense malignity, as he exclaimed in accents of bitter, yet melancholy vehemence, "Your revenge may at last be satisfied. Stamp the life out of me now, and be happy! Man, man, you have destroyed me! Yes, vengeance has overtaken the guilty! Let it come; I care not longer to escape! My life has lately been one scene of living agony. The tranquillity promised me by my confessor, was only like the green herbage that smiles over a bottomless quagmire. I ask but to find oblivion for ever, and ever, and ever! They assured me of peace in that church of indulgences and of pur-

chased pardons! Peace—peace to a blood-stained conscience! No; oh, no! Had Cain peace? Has God altered his decree that there shall be blood for blood? Oh that I had never lived!—that I had never known the superstition that misled me. Oh that everything in this world were blotted out—that my storm-tossed soul might become utterly extinct!”

O’Grady’s words rushed out with sounding fury, like a torrent tumbling over its rocky bed; while his vehement agitation formed a startling contrast to the statue-like coldness of his usual aspect. With a ghastly stare he glanced around on the sea of faces all turned towards himself in an excitement of tragical interest, and a convulsive shudder ran through his whole frame. It was most powerfully restrained—yet terrible in aspect, for there was dark, hopeless despair in that look of wild, supernatural agony.

When his judge with mournful dignity assumed the black cap to pronounce sentence, the wretched criminal muttered to himself in accents that thrilled through the hearts of those few very near who heard him—

“It is come at last! Long, long have I feared this hour. Years, and years, and years delayed; but it has come at last! Blood cries for vengeance till it be heard. I am a soul-blighted murderer. Now there stands an eternal line of separation

between me and all mankind. The sentence of death has long rung in my ears. Yes, let me die without pity, without light, faith, hope, or comfort. All is ended; all is black despair !”

O’Grady paused; and his look of resolute, callous, deliberate hopelessness was horrifying to behold. It had the grim sternness of death, as he continued saying—“ My bodily actions from boyhood till now have been those of a mere mechanical image, the strings and pulleys guided, ruled by others. My obedience was mere apathy; my conscience long asleep, without preserving in it one echo of truth. When I prayed in those days, it was with no more real devotion than that of the church bell that tolled me to chapel. When I sung hymns, it was with no more feeling than that of the organ which accompanied me.”

No sound is so awful as the laugh of utter self-abandonment; and O’Grady now deliriously tossing his arms above his head, while the light that blazed in his eyes was perfectly startling, laughed aloud in bitter agony, exclaiming—“ It is ages since these lips have spoken the naked truth. Let me for once in my fleeting life do so now. Let me lift up the shroud of time, and confess—not to a priest, but to mankind—to all who will listen. Not more closely shall my winding-sheet cleave soon around my mortal body than the sins of my sleepless conscience have clung to my upbraiding memory.

Oh! the years of wearing remorse and fear, during which my miserable life has dragged on, knowing as I did O'Hara to be chasing me on to the very scaffold. He or I must have perished. Who can tell what it is to live alone with a blood-stained conscience. Its reproaches would not be banished, put to sleep, nor drugged by false promises into silence. Nature and the God of nature make their upbraiding voices heard in accents that no priest can silence. No! conscience has haunted me night and day; sometimes as a friend, urging me to repent; and oftener as an enemy, driving me to despair. Long have I devoured my own heart in solitary torture; and now it seems a relief to pour out my secret like burning lava before this assembly. Since the worst is at last known, I feel almost at rest. The gloomy prison, the iron-barred windows, the food without refreshment, the sleep without repose, the turnkey steeled against every feeling of compassion, the triumph of O'Hara, the horror of assembled spectators, the scaffold and the halter, are all as nothing now, compared to the terrors, not by any device of man to be extinguished of blood-stained guilt. Now then let me die. Now then let me go through the whole masquerade of a public execution! Now I am impatient—oh, how impatient, to have it over; yet I die without hope.”

On the verdict of wilful murder being pro-

nounced, a simultaneous shout of applause burst from the assembled crowd, reverberating throughout the whole court, and spreading from door to door, from window to window, from street to street, until thousands had united in one outcry of rejoicing. When O'Grady confessed that after Lady Brownlow detecting him in opening the desk of Sir Francis, he saw that his own disgrace and dismissal were inevitable, and from that moment how he deliberately planned the death of his benefactor, a low groan of indignation rung through the audience, and all pity seemed to have become extinct.

Not long, however, was O'Grady in his condemned cell, left in that state of abject solitary despair, to face the thought of death unpitied and alone. The good, pious, and most judicious Mr. Mortimer attended that wretched criminal in the prison, receiving from him a voluntary acknowledgment of all which he had already confessed and more. By his rational, devout and truly humane consolations, there seemed every hope that the worthy clergyman might bring the unhappy culprit to a sincere and enlightened repentance, humble, sorrowful and profound, but not without hope, for it rested on the promises and doctrines of that holy Gospel which brings good news to all who are of a broken and contrite spirit, and who seek for pardon through that only

propitiation by which forgiveness can reach the soul of any living mortal.

It seemed indeed that Mr. Mortimer's unceasing visits had produced the most beneficial effect, for though remorse is not always repentance, nor self-condemnation always productive of self-reformation, yet there was a solemn sincerity in his tone, and a fervent humiliation in his expressions, which seemed to that benevolent and hopeful Christian Mr. Mortimer, the unmistakeable evidences of a genuine conversion, and he trusted that now at last, when the storm was darkest and the prospect dreariest, this perishing sinner had turned in earnest with hope and gratitude to the anchor of his salvation.

It was well that those around O'Grady had lost no time in persuading him to complete and sign his deposition, nor Mr. Mortimer in preaching to him a genuine repentance! But a very few days elapsed after his conviction, before the criminal was literally taken possession of in the condemned cell by his usual confessor of former days, Father O'Leary, a dark Schedoni-looking individual from Dublin, famous for his extraordinary skill in relieving criminals from every pang of remorse, and for building up even the most depraved assassins into a state of hardihood which enabled them to appear triumphantly on the scaffold ready to kick the world from under their feet.

This Irish priest hurried over from the banks of the Shannon as soon as he had finished escorting to the gallows three of his most successful cases. These criminals, of whom a very full account appeared at the time in all the London newspapers, some months ago had committed a cold-blooded murder on their own mother, but they died with martyr courage before an admiring mob of enthusiastic Papists at Cork.

Father O'Leary, whose religion rested on a basis not much more safe to the lives of others than the superstition of the Thugs, generally gave ample assurance to his own particular criminals that they should at once be translated in a day from the gallows to the celestial regions. He now brought all his consolations to bear with similar intentions on the convicted villain O'Grady, and the pernicious effect was almost instantly evident. A prison, Father O'Leary represented as the very porch of heaven, and a condemned cell as the nearest stepping-stone to glory. O'Grady, who had always felt a stolid indifference to mere bodily suffering, was now worked up by a sort of Popish miracle to the highest delirium of scaffold-courage. He at length believed himself a ready-made saint, absolved from the heavy load of guilt by Father O'Leary, and entitled now to all the honours of a Cranmer or Ridley, or a Latimer, martyrs for their faith.

It had become a grand exhibition of Irish priestly influence to see O'Grady since he became prepared to make a triumphant exit from life on the gallows. The bewildered criminal was beset every hour, and closely watched by sombre downcast looking priests from Cork, in long black coats as if dressed by an undertaker. The result however of these dismal-looking visits turned out anything but dismal! O'Grady before a week had elapsed was worked up by the sort of mesmeric influence exercised over him, into a perfectly insane intoxication of spiritual ecstasy. In the presence of a listening and admiring mob, he stood on the scaffold calling himself "the happiest man alive!" He sung, he talked, he laughed, he welcomed death, he was ready to kiss the very rope that hung him, as well as to embrace "his best friend," the hangman.

Never had Mr. Calcraft's usually unpleasant duty been made so easy; and if O'Grady, like Punch in his box, could have hanged the hangman instead of himself, he would have spurned at the very idea of such ingratitude, not wishing to live another day, or an additional hour. In short, no one ever excelled O'Grady in the ruffian style of religious bravado inculcated at Cork and elsewhere, for he literally snapped his fingers with contempt at the world he was leaving.

To all the wondering spectators, O'Grady expressed a wish that their felicity equalled his own,

that they had the same certainty of future joy, and he looked upwards with an expression of lunatic-ecstasy, exclaiming, "The sun never shone on a happier man!"* Father O'Leary clapped his *protégé* approvingly on the shoulder, and the mob shouted with admiration as the priest and criminal advanced together towards the scaffold. O'Grady himself led off a joyous hurrah, in which the numerous spectators enthusiastically united. He then ran a few steps to overtake O'Leary, who preceded him, and jestingly catching the priest's arm, drew him hurriedly onwards through the applauding crowd. Not a pitying thought seemed to stray in that exciting hour, from any of the enthusiastic mob, to the memory of Sir Francis Brownlow on that fatal night, when his blood and brains were scattered on the green sod, to his wife, hurried heart-broken into her watery grave, or to his injured children, suffering under a lifetime of privation. No! the more heinous and remarkable a criminal's offence, the keener commiseration is generally given to "the unfortunate sufferer." O'Grady, now detected and about to be hung, excited a sort of admiring sympathy for the desperation of his crime and of his death. On the respectable authority of Father O'Leary, he was pronounced no longer "unfortunate," but the most fortunate

* See "Times."

of men, admired, wondered at, and applauded, as he stood forward on the scaffold, smoking a cigar, and his button-hole adorned with a white camellia, forwarded to him that morning by Anne Brownlow, who requested to have his autograph sent in return.

There is in the masses an increasing love of excitement, an intense craving for the horrible, which made them regard O'Grady now with a strange mixture of execration and respect. If his nature had always been like iron it now became like steel, as he loudly declared himself enchanted to escape from a world so unworthy and so utterly contemptible. Never was a mind more inflated with Newgate vanity, his conscience drugged to sleep with false hopes, his thoughts bewildered with distorted theology, and his fears set at rest by mental narcotics.

With a smile of contemptuous indifference, O'Grady received at the last the condolences of some few persons around eccentric enough to think his situation one to claim pity, but with a delirious smile he loudly exclaimed,—

“I am so tired of life, that even a public execution is preferable to living on another day. If a reprieve came this minute, I would tear it to atoms. The happiest of all my hours in this not very happy world will be that which closes the scene for ever.”

The triumphant malefactor then shook hands with one or two respectable spectators, saying, in tones of ecstatic insanity, "May you each be as perfectly prepared as I am when your death hour comes; and may you go as rejoicingly to glory! I forgive that persecuting, bloody-minded family, the Brownlows, though the sooner they are all sent out of this life the better for others, and especially for Irishmen. Any one of you that hastens the departure of my persecutor, Sir Richard, will do the world a service."

Groans and execrations from a number of the low Irish against Sir Richard became now very audible, but were suppressed by the police, while O'Grady added in a tone of jaunty carelessness,

"I wish you may all come to as good an end as mine.* I feel like a merchant going to reap the rich fruits of a fortunate enterprise. Too many have troublesome, interfering consciences, as I once had myself, which fetter the flight of their genius, torture the memory with bitter recollections, and haunt their pillow on the bed of death; but mine, thanks to Father O'Leary, is set at rest now, and I am on a perfect railroad to happiness! no tedious, harrowing bed of death for me! no terrors, no retrospections, but all joy, all certainty, the palm of a martyr, and the crown of a saint!"

* See "Times."

At this moment O'Grady's eye caught that of Mr. Mortimer looking at him with an expression of deep solemnity and of most mournful kindness. It was a farewell look of regretful pity, which reached the prisoner's inward soul, for he guessed that a fervent prayer of almost desponding anxiety hovered on the lips of one whose ministrations, calm, serious, and profound, had brought him for the time very deep and serious conviction. During one brief moment his intoxication vanished, and he became sobered into the awful consciousness of his own real state, as a presumptuous sinner, trusting in Father O'Leary, himself a sinner too, for the pardon of almost unpardonable crimes. The drop under his feet was not a more treacherous support to his body than the unwarrantable promises of that deceiving priest to his soul, and O'Grady at this instant felt it so. He would have given worlds of gold for a moment of time in which to make a real peace with his God, in which to commend his soul to the Saviour, and he saw with a pang of regretful gratitude that Mr. Mortimer, his only real friend, was now engaged in solemn prayer for him.

O'Grady had become chilled in body and soul ; with one convulsive agony of nature's fear there arose the wildest terror in his aspect, his blood-shot eyes distended with fierce agony, his limbs quivered with horror, his tongue became palsied

with fear, and he swept one trembling hand across his forehead as if to clear his sight; then clasping the hand of Mr. Mortimer he whispered in accents of almost inaudible anguish,—

“Pray for me! let me hear one word of real prayer, of real truth, and oh, may I yet depart a true penitent.”

Mr. Mortimer ceased not his supplications for mercy till all was over; and when the tragedy became at length closed, it might have brought back human emotions to a heart that had long disowned them, to hear the universal groan of horror from thousands of spectators when they witnessed the last dying struggle of mortal man in his mortal agony. Mr. Mortimer, deeply over-awed, repeated to himself these solemn lines in meditative seriousness:—

“That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner’s stay?
Whom shall he trust that dreadful day?”

“When, shrivelling like a parchèd scroll,
The blazing heavens together roll,
And nearer yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead!

“Oh! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be Thou, O Christ! the sinner’s stay;
So shall he meet that dreadful day.”

WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER XIII.

“So now ’tis ended, like an old wife’s story.”

ON the 16th of September, 1855, a public meeting took place in Exeter Hall to consider the calamitous state of the London poor, especially in respect to their intemperate habits, and, as usual on such occasions, this assembly was less numerously attended than any one which preceded it, as all those that took place previously during the week had related to controversial subjects, or to the more exciting topic of the Polish refugees, or to the reformation of the Italian monkey boys,—now a very numerous and dangerous class in the streets! The speeches relating to the London poor were all on the usual average in such assemblies, the oratory being instinct with excellent feeling, and several clergymen detailing most affecting anecdotes, illustrating that there is in London, owing to a deficiency of churches and schools, heathenism as degraded, ignorant and savage as in the most remote islands of the Pacific. Affecting descriptions were given of the sufferings, the wrongs, and the sorrows existing among

hundreds living almost within ear-shot of that very meeting, and of all that could be said on their behalf. British subjects were struggling wretchedly on, it was proved, in a state of homeless, hopeless, desolate misery, with none to teach, to comfort, or to support them, while they seemed unable either to live or to die.

The picture became fearful when one humane speaker represented that there are many thousands of persons wandering daily throughout the very streets of that greatest metropolis on earth and the wealthiest, who have not in the wide world a home; who know not where, on the face of this broad earth to find the next morsel they shall eat, nor a bed on which to repose. There were crowds, it was asserted, with nothing to lose but their miserable lives, and everything to gain, should the bands of society break loose, and the glorious institutions of England become endangered. A mere thin crust covered over all the materials for a revolutionary volcano; already there were the heavings of an earthquake threatening, unless religion and morality were better propagated, danger to the Church and Government of England. Her noble army abroad; her navy in foreign seas; her police, if they testified any unusual zeal or activity, under censure; her aristocracy unarmed; her well-wishers at home unprepared for a struggle; scarcity and discontent

prevailing among the numerous poor; while still the number daily increased, who congregated to London, and might one day burst forth in savage multitudes to shatter and prostrate a church in which no place seemed prepared for them, and the homes of a neglectful aristocracy, which they envied and which they hated with increasing bitterness more and more every day,—every hour.

The few hundreds of spectators who formed an audience at this meeting, felt that the platform-orators had now become rather flat. The whole affair was like a mere family dinner, with nothing to excite or to electrify those around. Mere common-place, vulgar, every-day details about such well-known facts were but tiresome, relating as they did to dirty ignorant children, all addicted to thieving,—or to overworked, night-and-day needlewomen becoming blind. People might read in every newspaper such accounts as these of wives being beaten by their tipsy husbands, and of men drinking themselves dead drunk to escape for one moment into a short oblivion of all their abject misery.

“How tiresome! one has heard all that so often, Captain Clifford!” whispered Anne Brownlow, who was induced to attend this meeting in a very becoming new bonnet, as she heard that Lord Tipperary had agreed to take the chair. “The speakers are very tolerable, certainly, but

there is in the eloquence of these orators nothing yet to take me off my feet."

Lord Tipperary presided to Anne's entire satisfaction, with great dignity and decorum, bowing very low from his pedestal to the principal speakers, and very slightly to the inferior orators; but looking extremely solemn and attentive, except when he fell asleep, and even then the noble peer occasionally roused himself with a pinch of snuff, or whispered a few words to the nearest bishop.

Everybody had said everything that was intended; there were bursts of applause, immense excitement continued still, but no one had very greatly touched the feelings or the pockets of those numerous spectators now present. Anne Brownlow at last looked carefully out for the very smallest silver coin in her purse, "That," as she sagaciously said, "I may get away respectably; giving something, but not too much."

A lull had fallen over the whole assembly, and Lord Tipperary was beginning secretly to conjecture who ought to close the meeting with proposing a vote of thanks to himself as president, for having "so ably conducted the meeting," when a stranger unexpectedly hurried forward to the very front row of the platform, and whispered a word in the chairman's ear.

Lord Tipperary instantly started, and glanced round at this intruder with a look of utter

astonishment and perplexity; he eyed the stranger deliberately from head to foot, but after several minutes' hesitation appeared to recognise the speaker, as he earnestly whispered, "You regret, I am told, my Lord, very deeply having caused my utter ruin by a false suspicion; make an ample compensation now, by allowing me to address this meeting." To the wondering spectators this abrupt intruder seemed a singularly wild and picturesque-looking individual, evidently degraded from better days to the last extreme of poverty, yet with a striking air of intrepid recklessness. He still retained in his ragged and forlorn appearance the aspect of a long-decayed gentleman; but stormy feelings had left their indelible traces on his handsome features, though now his passions, like a fettered torrent of lava, had become fixed, cold, and changeless. His long hair, mingled with grey, was matted together, as if not lately conscious of a comb; the razor had been for weeks a stranger to his chin; and he wore the sort of straggling, disorderly, moth-eaten moustachios that frequently adorn the faces of those who wish to look like officers, without the trouble or expense of being in the army. There was something gloomy, terrible, yet magnificent, like Milton's Lucifer, in the expression of that man's appearance, lean, bent, and wrinkled as he was; and his red, quick,

wandering eye, overshadowed by his heavy eyebrows, seemed as if burned and parched by an unquenchable fire.

"Can there be life in such a woe-begone skeleton as this? he looks like that picture of Cain in the Exhibition," observed Anne shudderingly; "I think, Captain Clifford, we need scarcely remain to hear that highly-gifted gentleman in the ragged cravat."

"His threadbare coat, not certainly of the present century, is buttoned considerably above the chin to conceal the absence of that indispensable garment, now probably in the hands of his laundress," added her companion, contemptuously. "And the lower part of the gentleman's dress is ingeniously long to hide a slight deficiency of stockings!"

"I do not believe the creature has had a dinner for weeks," continued Anne. "If I had such a thing as a plate-chest or a jewel-box, he is the last man on earth I would trust with the key."

There ensued a pause in the meeting, full of wondering suspense, while the intruder firmly maintained his post, looking almost sternly around, until Lord Tipperary, after a brief consideration, announced with obvious unwillingness, that he requested the audience would listen to a very few words from "Mr. O'Hara."

"He is evidently a maniac! How very dreadful,

and how excessively interesting! Will they carry a hat round afterwards for his benefit?" whispered Anne, rearranging her bouquet, and shaking out her skirt. "I declare, Lord Tipperary is going to let him speak!"

"We shall have the last news from Bedlam," answered Captain Clifford, smiling. "I wonder his friends, if such a man has any, do not shut him up!"

"He looks very mad," replied Anne, shudderingly; but sitting down all in a flutter to enjoy the excitement, and fanning herself diligently. "I suppose Lord Tipperary and that whole platform full of people could hardly hold him down! There, now! Look! Listen!"

O'Hara did appear frightfully excited when he stood up thus before the wondering audience, resolved, with a determination which death itself could scarcely have shaken, to address this great meeting, and to tell all around with his own native eloquence what he knew and had seen respecting the guilt, the danger, and the folly of neglecting the wants, the misery, the discontent, the radicalism, the ignorance, and the heathenism of the London poor, many without churches, schools, homes, or even necessities.

Once O'Hara's talents for speaking had been most peculiar, and the singular picturesqueness of his style, like that of no other living mortal, so

strange, so original, so full of bold illustration, striking anecdote, and inimitable imitations; and Lord Tipperary knew all this. His oratory when he grew thoroughly excited became often a perfect whirlwind, a storm, a thunderbolt, yet softened at times by a depth of pathos which filled every heart with emotion, every eye with tears, every mind with the deepest solemnity.

Anne did all in her power to show that she listened under protest to so ill-dressed an orator; while O'Hara stood for a short moment silent, to collect himself. Then his eye became illuminated with intellect, and his whole countenance instinct with emotion. His very stature seemed to expand with a new aspect of dignity, and as he proceeded there was a sort of untaught grace in his very attitudes, which gave infinite effect to the whirling, sweeping, crashing power of his eloquence. It was not ranting, it was not burlesque; but it was nature's own oratory reaching actually to the sublime, while no man could hear him and not take a higher view than he had entertained before of human duties, human affections, and human destinies. It was impossible now for any one, except, perhaps, Anne Brownlow, not to see that there conspicuous on that platform stood, in spite of poverty, dissipation, rags, and neglect, the remains of what had once been a genius—yes; a genius of no ordinary stamp.

O'Hara spoke, and in a very few minutes everything was forgotten except the eloquence which riveted every eye, which attracted every ear, which roused every heart in willing obedience to its dictates. There was a variety in his tones, an originality in all his expressions, and a sort of savage grandeur in his action, perfectly startling. No actor on the stage—not Kean himself—could have spoken with more passion, vivacity, sentiment and grace; while O'Hara personated characters in marvellous variety, assuming the voices, the dialect, and the action of many different people at once, till the audience, though they saw but one, felt as if listening to a multitude.

O'Hara from sad experience, from personal knowledge, from the most intense suffering, described as no other man could have done, that infinite load of misery, festering to the destruction of soul and body, among the London poor. He acted over whole scenes which he had himself witnessed; representing, with his own peculiar power of imitation, all that had been said by the unhappy victims, mingled with traits of generosity, instances of self-sacrifice, proofs of mutual affection—all that belongs to human hopes and to human fears—with a rushing torrent of word and action that might have been compared to Niagara itself, and which at length even carried Anne Brownlow "off her legs." She stared—she listened—she actually wept!

“You may ask,” he said towards the conclusion, after a pause of deep emotion, “what is the root and origin of all this degraded wretchedness among the poor of England? and the groans of many thousands might answer in accents of despairing misery, ‘It is intoxication!—it is the blasting, scathing, searing, mildewing, soul-destroying, hell-deserving vice of drunkenness.’ London, the very centre of this world’s wealth and glory, is steeped from end to end in ardent spirits! See how every street blazes night after night with its gorgeous gin palaces, the scene and theatre of almost universal ruin. Observe that man standing behind his own attractive counter, the lights glittering around him, the warm fire glowing at his side, the sparkling glass in his hand, the music sounding for his penny-fair concert up-stairs. Observe that hesitating, wretched customer, shivering at the door—his unhappy wife and children are starving at home; he is cowering before the entrance in darkness, in rain, in cold, his few rags huddled around him, his whole body quivering in the chilling blast. That miserable being has a few hardly-earned coppers in his pocket. Shall he share these with his wife and children, all watching for him with wearied impatience at home, or shall he purchase an hour’s oblivion of all his misery at once—not to cure, but to forget it? He hesitates; a momentary compassion for those he loves delays his step

towards the scene of perdition. The spirit dealer smilingly beckons, advising him in friendly tones to take a single drop, for it will revive him. That self-interested councillor knows, perhaps, that this miserable victim has a grey-haired father dying of grief for the evil courses of his son—a mother weeping the bitterest tears that a parent can shed—tears because her son is degraded into a drunkard; a wife once happy in her devoted attachment, toiling as only a devoted wife can toil for the husband she loves,—that she prays for him with tears of anguish, and yet that she would rather see him expire at her side than that he became a drunkard,—but, knowing all this, the spirit dealer knows also that the shivering wretch before him still has an atom of his earnings left, which might, possibly, be drained from his almost empty pocket now. That wealthy publican, basking in all the glitter of his attractive gin palace, blazing with light and warmth, beckons in the haggard victim, plies him with all the liquor he can pay for, smilingly says it will do him good, and when the work of pillaging enticement is completed, he turns out his dupe reeling into the kennel, and bids him go ‘Home!’

“Oh! what a word is ‘home’ to the man who feels that he has made it desolate, hungry, and bare—a tattered, filthy, unwindowed home; himself unwashed, unblessed, and reeking with gin!

It is but a cellar, cold, dark, and dreary as the grave to which his vices are hurrying him. I speak from experience—I tell my own tale! There is nothing in Dante's 'Inferno' more utterly a hell than the heart of that man who has rendered miserable all those he loved,—miserable in proportion as they loved him. Such a worn-out, self-condemned wreck as I have described stands before you now. He is hopelessly and helplessly bound by the chain of a habit which drags him down fast to everlasting destruction,—he knows it,—yet he cannot escape. The hell I am going to can scarcely be worse than the hell I suffer now! You may believe me, or believe me not, but I cannot, cannot reform! I have tried, and tried, and tried again. My wife, my best of wives, with angelic patience, prays and watches for me night and day. If mortal woman could preserve her husband from destruction, she is that woman, yet it cannot be. She reminds me, but all in vain, that the glorious sun blazing on high is not so great as one human soul,—not equal in worth to the poorest mortal breathing the breath of life, but for whom his divine Saviour died. Yet, born for the highest privileges of creation, man lowers himself beneath the very cattle grazing in a field; and who can look without shuddering at an immortal being, his glorious intellect drowned in intoxication, himself

prostrated in a state of drivelling, blaspheming, idiotical drunkenness, the jest of idle children, an object of contempt, abhorrence, and pity, to all thinking men."

"I declare," whispered Anne, "his voice is like a trumpet! He reminds me at this moment of the Dying Gladiator. Did you ever attend a bull-fight in Spain? It must be vastly exciting,—but this is very well in its way! I wonder if this is at all like Cicero, or Demosthenes?"

Not receiving any encouragement to prolong the conversation, Anne resettled herself into an attitude of very vague attention, while O'Hara continued in a low, desponding voice of self-reproach, saying,—

"In every street the inviting glare of lights and the sounds of music entice me to my habitual vice, and if in compassion to myself and to my sorrowing wife I endeavour for a day to refrain, then the reaction is indescribably fearful. No earthly suffering is comparable to the agony of a drunkard's sober hours. Then I feel as if the talons of a vulture were tearing my very vitals,—wild animals appear to be pursuing me, loathsome reptiles come crawling over me, hideous heads are frowning out of the wall at me, and loud derisive shouts from hell itself ring in my very ears. They cry out for my soul! Conscience, like a bloodhound, seems following on my

track. Every finger appears to point at me in scorn, every eye to shun me in contempt; yet, hated, reviled, and despised as I am, the drunkard has a wife who still loves him with undying affection, who still hopes for his reformation, and who is doomed, alas! to ceaseless sorrow for a reprobate husband! I pursue a bubble, knowing that it is one! I cannot bear one moment's reflection on the past or on the future! Once I delighted to walk out in the fresh green fields, cheerfully conversing with my own heart, but now I dare not be alone—no; not for a moment! I dare not ask myself what I am, for the long fingers of memory rake up before me only images of horror and remorse. Once I was respected; once I was deservedly loved; once when the eye saw me it blessed me; once when the ear heard me it bore witness to me; but a false friend betrayed me into that habit which was my ruin,—into suffering under that false accusation which drove me to the maddest excess. In old times and in happier days I walked out to bask amidst the glorious light of heaven, and, looking up at the resplendent orb of day, felt often, with an elevating thankfulness, that the whole visible creation was made for man. Then I delighted to reflect, that the blazing sun itself was, in the sight of God, as nothing in comparison of that living, immortal soul which belonged to me, or which

belongs to the most insignificant of created mortals—to the beggar in his garret, as much as to the monarch on his throne.

“I admired in my young days the golden harvest waving in every field, the cattle grazing on the distant hills, the birds that carolled joyously on many a flourishing tree, and I felt then how great was the felicity of belonging to a creation so full of mercy and of bountiful goodness. I gazed often in admiring delight long ago at the innocent lovely children of my benefactor, and then felt that for worlds I would not injure one hair of their beautiful young heads. But temptation with its stealthy step overtook me—the love of ardent spirits, destructive as Satan himself, got possession of me, and in the wild delirium of bottle-deep potations I reduced those innocent girls to beggary. My own excellent wife I utterly ruined. Oh! if there be in this wretched world any one being who is already, before being translated from earth to heaven, a saint—if there exist one living mortal who might be a pattern to the other angels—it is that truly Christian wife who unceasingly prays in broken-hearted sorrow for her lost, depraved, and ruined husband. My own Susan, who hopes, and intercedes, and struggles yet for my soul, that it may not be finally and for ever lost.”

The wretched man clasped his hands over his

face in a burst of anguish that completely overmastered him, and in all the listening crowd there was not one who did not feel for his wild agony of sorrow and self-reproach. The coldest-hearted man had a tear standing in his eye, but those of the speaker were almost instantly congealed, while, in a voice hoarse from despair he added,—
“If such a woman, so beloved, so deservedly respected, has failed to reform the drunkard, what hope can remain for me now? As well might the waves of ocean attempt to still the hurricane that dashes them on the shore, as my kind, gentle, most unfortunate wife, endeavour to hold her delirious husband back from the burning ruin that he courts! She has knelt to me, wept for me, clung to me, and once I nearly struck her! This hand should, in my better days, have withered, before it would have dealt a blow to any woman or any child, but now,—she whom I love, honour, and respect above all who breathe the breath of life—even she I attempted to strike! She forgave me, and still hopes, still believes that her unworthy husband, in all his black-hearted iniquity, shall be pardoned by God and man, as entirely as he is pardoned by his own true-hearted and sanguine wife. It cuts through my heart like a dagger to think of her now!—to think that her hopes are not yet extinct of reforming me—*me*, a blasphemous, God-forsaken drunkard!”

The miserable O'Hara burst into a loud, frantic, delirious laugh, which rang through the hall and pealed up to the very ceiling in wild shrill accents, till at length he concluded in a low exhausted whisper, which was nevertheless distinctly heard to the utmost extremity of that great building, as he added,—

“ Hope has no echo now in my withered heart, but a dark deep shadow clings to my few remaining moments. I would sell the very skin off my own body for one hour's oblivion,—not for peace—that is never more to be mine,—not for hope—that was long since annihilated in the fire of intoxication,—not for joy—no! I have long forgotten what that means; but give me only one hour's oblivion and let the sight of my undone state be a warning to all others. If there be one spark of pity felt in this great assembly for the wretch lost beyond all redemption, do not waste another thought on my calamity, but after hearing the language of my pent-up, miserable, and corroded heart, unite now in one grand irresistible effort to shield all others from such a fate. Cure, as you see in my case, is next to impossible, but try prevention. Imitate America, and like that great nation, which resembles our own in its language, its religion, its morality, its laws, and its prosperity, more than any other, promulgate a decree against the use of ardent spirits, extinguish

the glaring light of every gin palace; silence the music within those dens of iniquity; find some innocent rational amusements for the relaxation of hardworking men, and teach children to dread the spirit dealer more than the midnight assassin, for the one only kills the body, and the other destroys the everlasting soul.

“Life is a strange, mysterious drama, and the dark tragedy of my own miserable existence is now about to close. I feel like one alone at midnight in a dark churchyard, the storm sighing mournfully among the broken tombs, and sounding like the ghosts of all my departed joys. Pity one who must appear to happier, to better men, mad, miserable, and utterly frantic. If ever once more in this world a prayer of mine may be supposed to ascend before the throne of grace, it shall be in accents of humble, heart-broken, earnest petition, that every effort may prosper made to sober mankind—to preserve all others, even were they my worst enemies, from the wretched fate of him whose voice is now heard for the last time that he shall ever speak to living men on the earth. I am goaded onward without ceasing to death, and shall to-morrow enter the silent grave with not a shroud over my miserable remains, nor a prayer to consecrate my latest sigh.”

Before any one had presence of mind enough to intercept him, O'Hara had vanished, leaving the

whole assembled multitude overawed by the fierceness of his despair. It seemed only a few minutes that he had spoken, but nevertheless, many on consulting their watches discovered with astonishment that they had listened without tiring to a speech of an hour's duration, and Captain Clifford declared that while he lived upon the earth its harrowing effect and the look of agonized despair with which it was accompanied, could never be forgotten.

"I declare this has been really quite an adventure!" exclaimed Anne, delightedly drawing on her gloves, arranging her bracelets, and pinning on her shawl, preparatory to a hurried exit. "What millions and billions of words that man poured out. It was a perfect cataract! Niagara turned into words! The wretched creature seems tired of everything and of everybody! It reminds one of Lord Byron: I forget the lines;

'Sated with home, of wife and children tired.'

Poor man! he should try change of scene!"

"Yes!" answered Captain Clifford, drily. "He seems likely soon to change the scene of this world for another!"

"Very true! He looked, when departing, exactly like a man going to hang himself! I wonder if he will? It is too shocking! I do really think he intended to save Mr. Calcraft the trouble of

publicly performing his unpleasant office," observed Anne, shaking out her dress, and in a fidget about her parasol. "He looked desperately desperate! I saw the tears in your eyes, Captain Clifford. How well Lord Tipperary is looking; his hair looks at this moment most magnificently black! I wonder how he likes presiding? It must be rather a bore! Do you think he saw us? I expect he will be greatly pleased at my attending. Oh, that poor tipsified man: I wish we could forget him!"

The same evening a mangled human being was observed floating on the Thames near Westminster Bridge, and great efforts were successfully used by a boatman until he brought the sufferer to shore. He was then carried on a shutter to St. Thomas' Hospital, where several very skilful physicians being present, they succeeded in almost miraculously restoring the stranger to a very feeble spark of life. So very weak and exhausted was the patient's circulation, however, that it became evident he could not possibly survive many hours, but would sink away almost immediately in mere weakness.

Search being made about the dying man's person, the remains of a tobacco-pipe was found in his pocket, and also an old tattered book of drinking songs, bearing this direction on its title-page: "Patrick O'Hara, Gutter Lane, Billingsgate." Without delay, a police messenger was humanely

despatched there, who courageously dived into that nest of disreputable courts and alleys, in the worst part of London, to ascertain if there were one living being sufficiently interested in the fate of this dying outcast to wish for an interview before he expired.

Not a moment was lost until the constable arrived again at St. Thomas' Hospital in the same police van which had carried him there; but he wore a graver look, and after alighting in haste turned round with an expression of deep sympathy and supported on his arm a woman, crouching as much as possible out of sight, who shunned every pitying eye among the many at St. Thomas' that were turned on her, but walked straight up to the patient's bed. Slowly, fearfully, and shudderingly she drew the curtain aside——

All was agony, stupor, and grief at the sight which it disclosed; but no exclamation escaped from Susan's lips; no change appeared in her countenance, already quite livid; yet her white lip trembled as she gazed, a picture of desolate despair at the gasping form that lay stretched before her. Never was a step more noiseless than that with which she had approached the sufferer; never was there a hand more softly tender than that which she laid on his burning, throbbing brow. All external emotion had been quenched in the profound depths of her sorrow; but one silent

tear rolled heavily down on Susan's cold cheek, and dropped upon O'Hara's face. Then at last his eyes opened, and he looked up. Too much exhausted for any vehement agitation, O'Hara did but gaze for an instant with languid melancholy into the face of his wife. At first, his eye had an expression of scrutiny, and of very doubtful recognition; but after some time he feebly held out his hand, with a ghastly smile peculiar to the dying. Then a heart-wrung tear stole insensibly down his haggard cheek, and in scarcely audible accents he sobbed out these words—"I knew you would come!"

Susan pressed her quivering lips to his cheek, and sat down silently on the bed. Her sorrow appeared the more affecting because it was so tearlessly profound. The greatness of this calamity had utterly overwhelmed her; but, gently taking from the hospital nurse a cup of strong soup mixed with wine, which was to be constantly administered, she put it from time to time between his lips. In a low soothing voice, she still whispered words of comfort, though scarcely hoping her husband could understand her, for his eyes had in them a dull vacant stare, like one in a mesmeric trance; and after some time he muttered to himself in low, dreary hopeless accents, "Why did not death take me when I was in the humour to die? Susan, you have wasted all your

pure, holy, and honest-hearted affections on one totally unworthy. I ought rather to be attended by a man like O'Grady's confessor, accustomed to intoxicate a guilty conscience; accustomed to tell a dying criminal that he need but call himself a Papist in order to be saved; accustomed to tax crimes like a tavern bill, at so much a piece, and to assure sinners that, the score being discharged, they have sufficiently paid for the whole multitude of their vices. Oh that I could but believe these assurances! Then would I not rob on the high road to-day, that I might buy impunity of conscience to-morrow!"

At length, Susan slowly repeated to her husband in very distinct accents a hymn which she knew that O'Hara had been taught in childhood by his own parents. Often had he smiled in telling Susan of the ceaseless labour it had cost his mother to teach him, in his earliest infancy, those lines; and now, as Susan concluded the recital of them, the dying man languidly opened his eyes, saying, "Repeat that verse again!"

O'Hara listened as if it had been the sweetest music, and he joined mechanically in uttering the lines, until at length, as if suddenly become aware of their full import, he sat up in bed vehemently clasping his hands, and exclaiming, with almost frantic fervour, "Oh, mother!—mother! shall it indeed be so? Have your prayers, and my Susan's

followed the wretched sinner through life, to be answered now. That hour has come to me that comes to all; and may it, indeed, be true in my case that—

‘While the lamp holds on to burn
The greatest sinner may return.’”

“My very dear husband,” whispered Susan, in her own gentle soothing accents; “I have often admired, but never felt so deeply as now, the miraculous wisdom and goodness of God in giving to human beings the privilege of private prayer. Nothing but your own disinclination can cut you off from holding immediate communion with your own beneficent Creator. A humble Christian may even be untaught how to read or write; he may be blind, deaf, or even dumb; he may be feeble as you are now; he may be falsely accused; he may be hated of all men; he may be living in the whirl of society, or in the loneliness of a desert; he may be cast away at sea, he may be lost in a coal-pit, or he may be stretched on a dying bed, gasping out his life,—yet wherever he wanders, and whatever he does, each mortal man is seen, and heard, and known by a listening and by an answering God. You and I, then, shall be heard to-day, Patrick, if we unite together in asking for a free and merciful pardon. We are one now, but oh! how soon we are to be divided by death!

—and after that even your own wife, though she can never cease to weep for your loss, can no longer have the comfort of praying for your soul.”

O’Hara survived but a very short time, and that time was entirely spent in humble, fervent prayers of penitence, and in prayers also of gratitude for the ten thousand mercies of a long life, especially that greatest of all earthly blessings, his pious affectionate wife. “Your attachment, Susan, has been to me like a fragrant flower cast into a loathsome sepulchre. My heart must have broken but for you. What human being can bear to think that he is loved by no one—that none shall weep over his dishonoured grave!” A large tear forced itself through O’Hara’s half-closed lids, as he added, “You have ever been the best of all advisers, my own Susan; and now you are the best of all confessors. Guided by you, I should have lived a happier and died a better man; but your intercessions beside me here are as a lamp along the dark valley of death, in which I am apprehensively groping. Life and I are parted now! One should have lived in peace to die at peace; but when I remember the fervent prayers of my own earlier and better days,—when I consider the prayers offered up for me by such a mother—and by such a wife!——”

O'Hara's voice became suddenly inaudible; he sobbed aloud, then heaved a heavy deep-drawn sigh, and expired!

Poor Susan!—

“Sad, silent, and dark were the tears that she shed,
As the night-dew that falls on the grass o'er his head.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“Alas ! her moral glance let Memory dart
Down vanish’d time, till summon’d ages rise
With ruin’d empires on their wings ! Thought weeps
With patriot truth to own a fun’ral day,
Heart of the universe ! will visit thee,
When o’er thy wreck some moralist shall bend,
And, musing, say, ‘ ’Twas *here* vast London stood ! ’”

R. MONTGOMERY.

ANNE BROWNLOW continued in a state of exclamatory excitement and vacant wonder all the next day about the strange ruffian-like orator who had electrified her by his eccentric address ; and she entertained all her friends going down to Sydenham afterwards with her description of what she called “ The O’Hara Outbreak.”

Anne was accompanying, next day one of those parties so common now at the Crystal Palace, consisting of a hundred people and upwards, who spend the whole day among sculptured figures, dolphins and Mercuries, in losing each other, and in playing at hide-and-seek, to find the stray members of the party, all of whom are invariably lost. In that palace for the million there ought

to be a crier to summon absentees; or Ariadne's clue to help all stragglers through that mighty maze, "but not without a plan." The splendid building, like a prodigious kaleidoscope, was full of interest and instruction for all ranks, ages, and classes. In that great house of cards, the gorgeous Alhambra, convinced the whole party, even Anne, that walls of azure and gold may be too brilliant, and that John Bull would very soon tire of anything so richly decorated. The great fountains were considerably discoloured at first, so that they seemed to be playing London porter, but in the end they elicited thunders of applause, having actually quite eclipsed those of Versailles; and the monster family of antediluvian animals made Anne almost go off in hysterics of horror and amusement at beholding such dragons and chimæras dire.

A dinner had been bespoken, to cost only three shillings and sixpence a head!—such an order would have made the waiters at the "Star and Garter" in Richmond grow grey during a night with consternation,—but there was actually something that called itself a dinner, and what several of the gentlemen considered a very good dinner, for which no more had to be paid; and Anne, in a panegyrical mood, said it really reminded her of a second-rate ordinary at Paris. "There is something odiously matter-of-fact in the roast beef and plum-pudding of an English fête like this," she said,

eating vigorously ; “ one never sees in our benighted country the little airy nothings which adorn a French dinner-table ! ”

“ We should try an appropriate dinner in each of the courts,” said Captain Clifford, “ an ollapodrida in the Court of Lions at the Alhambra ; a dish of fossil-fish with melted butter and catsup inside the pre-Adamite Iguanodon, which can swallow twenty-one guests at a mouthful, comfortably, and carry Professor Owen besides in his skull ; a beef and ale breakfast in the Elizabethan Court, and—I wonder what people lived on in Pompeii ? ”

“ I think that great Roman emperor, Pliny the Second, left a description of the city being itself potted and preserved at last in a stream of lava,” observed Anne, vaguely. “ How surprised the people must have been ! ”

“ Rather so, certainly ! ” replied Lord Tipperary, laughing. “ The ladies were buried alive while combing their hair ; misers, when counting their gold ; the priest at his prayers ; the prisoner in his chains ; the sentinel presenting arms ; and the young lady rejecting a very good offer ; so take warning, Miss Brownlow, and accept the next proposal. Did you ever see the casts taken from groups of living lizards at Florence, where a whole family of these reptiles are suddenly plunged alive into plaster of Paris, and an accurate impression

can be thus caught of all their dying contortions."

"Oh yes; they are beautiful! I bought one in bronze for a paper-weight," answered Anne, enthusiastically; "they really look quite alive!"

"Are you not afraid of being reported against by the 'Cruelty to Animals' committee?" asked Lord Tipperary. "If ever such a catastrophe should happen to us as to the good people of Pompeii, what a beautiful group you and I would make! I should endeavour to expire at your feet in as graceful an attitude as possible."

"Like a dying gladiator!" said Anne, laughing. "We should not want for models among all these beautiful casts around us. Look at that dancing Satyr—so like Lord Brentford! Indeed I feel almost buried in stucco here at any rate, seeing that all the splendour around us now is, after all, mere plaster of Paris."

"Yes; one has an indignant consciousness of being imposed upon, like looking at false jewellery," answered Captain Clifford; "or seeing rouge, false teeth, and a wig; it all appears very plausible and very grand, but still you have a feeling that the bronze statues and marble halls are but gilt gingerbread after all."

"Yet how splendid the effect!" added Lord Tipperary. "Observe that stained glass window by Hardman; that restored doorway from

Tintern Abbey ; the arch from Rochester Cathedral, and that iron gate of Lichfield. I am convinced that there never was seen in this world before, from the earliest ages to the present hour, so magnificent a scene as our Queen's reception of the French Emperor and Empress at the Crystal Palace. The field of the cloth of gold, with Henry the Eighth and Francis, which I remember seeing as an eye-witness long ago, was nothing to it. This building itself, larger than York minster, shining like a diamond, the circular vault of glass blazing brightly beneath a glittering sunshine ; terraces not to be matched in Europe ; these broad handsome staircases ; the two royal courts, with the lovely cortege of ladies in waiting ; also lords in waiting, gold sticks and silver sticks——”

“Yes!” interrupted Anne, enthusiastically ; “the Empress so beautiful ; the Queen still more so. Prince Albert most distinguished in appearance, and the Emperor looking his best ; a mob of thirty thousand brilliantly-dressed personages, like a living rainbow of every colour, welcoming them with a hearty English hurrah ! three times three, and four times four. The Royalties bowing, the fountains playing, the flowers blowing, the music crashing, the statues standing still, and that lovely Brussels lace parasol of the Empress ! It was altogether sublime !”

“Certainly,” answered Lord Tipperary, laugh-

ing, "the Crystal Palace is, in fact, a *multum in parvo* of the whole world, from almost before the creation, when those disgusting crocodiles and other trash with impossible names were the sole proprietors of this muddy earth, till now, in modern times, when its productions have arrived at the grace and perfection of such models as you and I."

"Yes! and the Venus de Medici," added Anne, smiling; "every person mentioned in history is here!—deposed emperors, ex-kings, Dutch admirals, French generals, the Farnese bull, authors, actors, beautiful Queen Marys, hideous Queen Elizabeths, smiling Anna Boleyns, and frowning Henry the Eighth. Call over a muster-roll of every celebrated man or woman in history, and his stucco representative might call out, 'Here!' Look at those lovely statues, 'stone dolls,' as the old Lord Pembroke called them, representing Damon and Pythias, or Castor and Pollux, I forget which,—or somebody said they were Beaumont and Fletcher."

"There is no occasion for any one now to go abroad," added Lord Tipperary; "we have a much better Alhambra here than in Spain, where the original is all mildewed and shabby. The world-famed Apollo Belvidere looks quite at home here. I used often to be mistaken for him in Italy! I never saw the bronze gates of

Ghiberti look half as fresh and well as in the Renaissance Court. That Cupid seems really alive, and aiming his arrows at us; and the Elgin marbles appear quite as broken and disastrous here as in the original fragments!"

"I never can see the beauty of those mutilated remnants—hands without fingers, and faces minus the nose; indeed, I see in the most admired statues of former days, not even in that crowd of about twenty Venuses in the Greek Court no faces half so beautiful as our own. The foreheads are so very low that they would drive a phrenologist frantic, and they all want expression."

"To the assiduities of your admirers, Miss Brownlow, you seem always cold as stone and marble," replied Lord Tipperary, jestingly, for he liked often to go as far as he could in complimenting young ladies without committing himself. "If you continue as chilling to me as hitherto, I shall order a pedestal to be prepared for you in marble at once."

"Pray do. I delight in Shakspeare's scene of the statue coming to life, as it is acted in the 'Winter's Tale,'" said Anne, laughing; "you may depend upon it, I would not remain long insensible."

"Let me hope not, if I came to revive you! I feel here, among all these busts, like that man in the Arabian Nights, who arrived in a city where the inhabitants had all been turned into

stone," replied Lord Tipperary; "and when I look at all the thousand wits, authors, statesmen, and pleasant companions, some who died yesterday, and some whole centuries ago, lifelessly represented around us, I could exclaim like Byron, 'Oh, that these lips had motion!'"

"Shall we ever see in the world again such humourists as these! Johnson, Sterne, Swift, Franklin, Garrick, Goldsmith, and even that dear old gossiping Boswell," exclaimed Captain Clifford, glancing around on the celebrities of a former century. "There is no rugged magnificence of intellect left on the earth now, but mere flowers and shrubs rather than bold, picturesque forest-trees."

"I wonder that the over-educated young people live at all now; and, indeed, they do not," added Lord Tipperary. "The two last senior wranglers of Cambridge have died within the year; and the only youth so distinguished at the University, who paid me a vacation visit in Ireland, was the dullest booby in conversation that I ever had the misfortune to encounter. Before the human intellect is utterly dwarfed in this country, I trust the vanity of parents may be diminished, so that a few of the rising generation may escape the prevailing epidemic of a cramming education in their infancy, which kills so many, and makes the lives of others scarcely worth having in after years, from nervous headaches and debility. I probably

owe my superlative intellect and my very life to my own resolute idleness as a boy, and to having a very lazy nursery governess, who was nicknamed Mrs. Holiday.’”

“ It would be a good plan in large families if every alternate boy were allowed to be a genius, and left a little leisure to cultivate his own individuality,” said Anne, laughing; “ I never knew a particularly clever, entertaining man yet, who did not lament having suffered in his childhood some disadvantages of a rather retarded education, whereas his having had a few leisure moments was the very cause of his preeminence.”

“ Byron enjoyed many ‘ Hours of Idleness;’ and the late Susan Ferrier, the most agreeable of authors and of companions, used to say that much of her childhood and youth had been spent in a state of do-what-she-pleased leisure,” said Captain Clifford. “ How I have laughed at her witty sayings, and wept over her pathetic touches; but the mind that conceived those tales of ‘ Marriage,’ ‘ Destiny,’ and ‘ The Inheritance,’ did not grow in a hot-bed or forcing-house, under a succession of masters from early morning till dusk; nor did Sheridan and Sydney Smith waste the oil of their juvenile lamps in poring unceasingly over black-letter books, dictionaries, grammars, and vocabularies.”

“ If people eat all day, a surfeit does not nourish

the body, but pampers it," observed Captain Clifford; "even the most wholesome roast-beef should only be taken in moderation, at intervals; how much more should mental food be judiciously administered, and not given with a pitch-fork."

"You are perhaps glad that the Alexandrian library was burned," said ~~Fanny~~ *Fanny* smilingly, turning from Lord Tipperary to Captain Clifford; "and you would evidently make another bonfire to-morrow of the Bodleian."

"By no means! Nothing is so malicious as to overstate one's opinions, and you ought to be punished for doing so, by being obliged to join Tipperary and me in a glass of wine. No; my code of wisdom does not utterly exterminate the classics; but I am for every man being taught exactly as much as I was taught myself—or rather, as little."

"You know enough not to strike your head against a post," said Anne, laughing. "But, seriously, Captain Clifford, did you learn anything more?"

"Not much; but I have learned to know your merits sufficiently to admire them, and to wish that everybody resembled you."

"Now, Lord Tipperary, here is Captain Clifford becoming satirical: and you really must not let him succeed in putting my modest merit out of countenance. Pray, support me."

“Yes; only let me support you for life, and I shall be happy!” said Lord Tipperary, in a jesting tone; but Anne coloured violently, and looked very pretty and embarrassed, saying in a low voice, “If you are in earnest, that is too good an offer to be refused!”

Anne, in perfect simplicity, had done what her very cunning father could not have manœuvred better; and Lord Tipperary felt himself fairly caught. How many men, tempted on by the opportunity to make a neatly-turned speech, have thus found themselves in a *cul de sac* from which there is no escape.

Anne looked rather charming, and rather silly. Lord Tipperary felt extremely foolish, and a pause ensued. There seemed really no getting out of the scrape. He was supposed to have made an offer, and he had certainly been accepted! Lord Tipperary felt that he could not rise to explain. He possessed not moral courage for that; and, in short, he plunged deeper and deeper still; while Anne, perfectly convinced that her lover had long been romantically attached to her, only wanting courage and opportunity to propose, felt glad that he had at last safely unburthened his mind.

Anne had for some time reconciled herself to the Tipperary barony, though only an Irish one, seeing that the five balls of Lord Brentford's

coronet were evidently out of reach; and though she felt rather an objection to Ireland, in case of being shot over a hedge, or drowned in crossing the channel, yet she knew that Tipperary House was one of the best in Dublin, and she had quite made up her mind to shine as a star of considerable magnitude at the Vice-Regal court—perhaps even to be Lady-Lieutenant!

Lord Tipperary bestowed a farewell thought on half-a-dozen young ladies whom he had “very nearly thought of marrying,” but on the whole not one was prettier than Anne; therefore, with a little invisible mental shrug, he yielded to fate or fortune, and carried on the joke till it became too much in earnest ever afterwards to be retracted.

Lord Tipperary left the dinner-table at Sydenham that day an engaged man, though he had taken his place there as little intending such an exploit as any other young officer in the Palace who was in the habit of flirting with every young lady he could see, and of drawing back the moment there appeared any danger of its being thought “too particular.”

When Anne blushing took Lord Tipperary’s arm, evidently in a little tremor of modest felicity, he felt as if walking away in a mesmeric trance. They strolled to the Mount of Roses, and along the borders embroidered with flowers, in the most

romantic way; but Lord Tipperary was silently thinking how he had undervalued Anne's abilities, as she certainly was on this occasion too clever for him by half! When at length Mrs. Brownlow, after a few words aside from Anne, came up to him, in a flutter of maternal ecstasy, to tell Lord Tipperary that he was, without exaggeration, the most fortunate man on the face of the earth, to have secured her "precious treasure"—"her darling girl"—he could scarcely believe his own ears that he was actually accepting congratulations on the prospect of being married to Anne Brownlow!

Daniel got a family hint on the subject from his delighted wife, and followed up all that had been said by Mrs. Brownlow respecting Anne's perfections; and he became eloquent on the inconsolable regret with which they would both have parted with that best of daughters, had the sacrifice been made for any one less acceptable to himself; but with pride and pleasure he now welcomed the prospect of having Lord Tipperary for a son-in-law. Mr. Brownlow's white waistcoat seemed to expand with delight, and his whole countenance glittered with satisfaction, as he afterwards deliberately ran over in his mind's eye the Tipperary rent-roll. With that he had long since made himself familiar, and he now planned in his own active mind the very residence which ought to be settled on Anne as a jointure-house,

as well as what amount of pin-money he might venture on making a struggle for.

During that day at Sydenham, where everybody belonging to the large party was in search of everybody, and nobody could ever be found at the right time, the people who seemed most utterly lost to view were Lord Brentford and Theresa.

"They are decidedly not in Pompeii, nor in the Gallery," observed Fanny, almost breathless with her long search; "nor in the Renaissance Court."

"Nor in the fountains; but they are certainly in love, and among the roses!" said Captain Clifford, leading Fanny off in that direction, though very determined not to find Lord Brentford, nor any one else now, as he had an affair of his own to settle, which could only be spoken of in a tête-à-tête.

It was truly quite distressing how very long Captain Clifford and Fanny had to wander about through the remotest part of Sydenham terraces in search of nobody, and how perseveringly Fanny looked on the ground, as if she had lost her favourite bracelet, the colour flitting brightly on her cheek, like an aurora borealis.

"I dare hardly ask you to share my wealthless lot, and to accept my devoted attachment now, as who can tell how much of me shall be left after my campaign, or whether I shall ever return at all," said Captain Clifford, with a seriousness that

became him well. "The best and bravest of my countrymen are gone before to the field of fame, and I cannot attempt to hide from you that my fervent desire is to follow immediately. A soldier's life at home is at present but a waveless calm, and it will be a brilliant strife in which to share for liberty, religion, and permanent peace."

"Yes! bought on a glorious field of grief with the blood and tears of many nations; but the price must be paid, and it is noble to see how all Englishmen, high and low, plebeian or aristocratic, have rushed forward, in chivalrous emulation, to lay their lives down at the call of their Queen and country,—

'These warriors, matchless since the first of time,
Rear their bright banners o'er unconquer'd towers.'

"No man could be a man if he hesitated to take the sword, the banner, and the field; but, Fanny, I would not be a man either, if I did not also feel deeply the sorrow of parting with you—of going, when no certainty awaits us that we ever shall meet gain,—

'Ah! may'st thou ever be what now thou art,
Thus guileless, beyond Hope's imagining;
As fair in form, as warm, yet pure in heart;
Love's image upon earth, without his wing.'

Promise me, on my return, an enthusiastic welcome, such as I intend to deserve, and the precious gift of your hand!"

“It is all I have to give,” answered Fanny, in low, tremulous accents; “still it is given with my whole affection. I never loved, or could have loved, any one but you.”

“Then, indeed, our hearts are become one, and my life has for evermore a double value. I look like the happiest of men, as you may perceive, yet I cannot look half so happy as I feel! Hitherto I have been a very indifferent wanderer along life’s rather barren path; but henceforth my existence shall attain a new value, if I can but achieve any honour, that must inevitably render you, whether I live or die, proud that my all of hope or ambition was centred in yourself.”

“Who ever had more reason to be proud and happy than I at this moment!” said Fanny, deeply moved. “Your attachment is all in all on earth to me; but ‘fear and sorrow fan the fire of joy.’ I never peruse without most solemn emotion the list of my countrymen fallen in patriotic defence of those privileges in which I share myself; but our tears cannot number the dead. With grateful sorrow, I have made a duty even to read over the name of every private in every regiment who has bravely fallen, feeling that each man died a hero, for the renown of his own deeds, and for the gratitude of his country—‘in man’s regret to live, and woman’s tears.’ Not a Corporal Smith or a Private Brown has died without my respectfully

studying over the name to which his country owes a pang of sorrow—‘Soft sigh the winds of heaven o’er their grave.’ But now—oh, how I shall tremble to see a newspaper, and dread those horrid, horrid electric telegraphs! The news they bring rushes in upon us like a cannon-ball, so startling, so desolating, so totally without one softening circumstance, to bring comfort along with the most heart-breaking intelligence.”

“Then, Fanny, remember, if you hear any evil tidings of me, that my last word shall be your name, my latest thought a prayer for your consolation. It is a serious enterprise in which we are engaged, and who can tell how many or how few shall survive to tell the tale of our final victory. Enough for me, if I contribute my mite to the great cause; and, living or dying, see Britain victorious,—

‘The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn,
Till danger’s troubled night depart,
And the star of peace return.’”

“There is scarcely a family of distinction in Britain, even among those that sit on the highest pinnacle of fashion and consequence, that has not suffered the loss of one member at least; many of more,” observed Fanny, thoughtfully. “Who does not say that the aristocracy of England

has shown itself worthy of the ancestors who gained their noble position at the battles of Cressy, Agincourt, and Blenheim. We are not fallen off since those days—

‘When Linden saw another sight,
When the drum beat, at dead of night,
Commanding fires of death to light
The darkness of her scenery.

‘By torch and trumpet fast array’d,
Each horseman drew his battle-blade,
And furious every charger neigh’d
To join the dreadful revelry.

‘Then shook the hills with thunder riven,
Then rush’d the steed to battle driven,
And louder than the bolts of heaven
Far flash’d the red artillery.’”

Captain Clifford looked his admiration as Fanny, with rising enthusiasm, repeated these lines, evidently unable to stop, and never was there a voice that expressed more touching emotion.

“I like to feel now, very differently from what I did when going rejoicingly to the Kaffir war, that I am sacrificing much for patriotism in leaving Fanny,” said he at length, in a low, concentrated tone; “and I like to think that you would not even wish me to shrink from what is due to my Queen and country. You cordially consent to my duty being done now, Fanny, do you not? To glory or the grave!—

‘How glorious fall the valiant, sword in hand,
In front of battle, for their native land ;
But, oh ! what ills await the wretch that yields,
A recreant outcast from his country’s fields.’”

“I should like to be more of a Spartan than I am,” replied Fanny, her beautiful eyes filling: they looked like violets in a shower. “Victories are joyous to those at home who have neither sons, brothers, nor nearer ties to tremble for; but do not run any unnecessary risks. I think that even the bravest soldier may remember, ought to remember, he has those in England who would—yes! I am not ashamed to say it, Frederick, I would break my heart and die if you fell. Do your duty, then, your whole duty; but for my sake run no uncalled-for risks in the dreadful game of lives. There is mourning and desolation around some solitary hearths at home, where the gallant spirit might have survived to return, but for that exuberant courage which defied death, and almost sought it. If you die at the post of duty, Frederick, I can look upon that as a mournful decree of Providence; but if you rush upon the sword of an enemy unnecessarily, then—then I shall think you had at the moment forgotten your own poor Fanny.”

“Never believe anybody if they tell you I was rash,” answered Captain Clifford, smiling; “I am too experienced a veteran to play with cannon-balls. No! if life and limb can be honourably

preserved, they shall be; and happy the day that reunites us, Fanny, once more at home, under a flag of victory, and laurelled with triumphant success. If not—if I am to be laid with the mighty low—then give to my memory love's glorying tribute—not forlorn regret,—

‘I charge my name with power to conjure up
Reflection's balmy—not its bitter cup.’ ”

Was anything ever seen more lovely than that bright, agitated face, all tears and smiles, now turned with confiding affection to Frederick Clifford? No man living had a more fervent appreciation of every refined pleasure in life, and especially of those which spring from the affections. He saw in Fanny now the simplicity of a schoolgirl, united to the understanding and the sensibility of a woman; while there was in all she said high principle, mingled with truthfulness and sincerity, such as he perceived no arts nor any circumstances could ever shake. He thought with heart-warm pleasure even of the privations he must share with such a companion for life; and he promised himself to shield her with unwearying care from every cloud of sorrow that could overshadow their united happiness.

To be a soldier's bride was a very high distinction in the estimation of Fanny. To unite her fate with one already noted in the annals of chivalrous enterprise, was a hope that caused her

heart to beat with noble enthusiasm, and to share every vicissitude of Captain Clifford's uncertain futurity was more dear to a generous nature like hers, than if he could have raised her at once to the most dazzling pinnacle of prosperity. Her own birth being now ascertained, by Sir Richard's active investigations, and proved, she had the happiness of knowing that with her hand she might probably bestow on Frederick Clifford what would at least buy his next step in the regiment, and it was a pleasure to both of them that their engagement had been indissolubly ratified before either had a certainty that she could hereafter even pay for her trousseau.

“And now may Hope her talisman employ
To snatch from heaven anticipated joy ;
And all her kindred energies impart
That burn the brightest in the purest heart.”

“To be married for nothing, and turn out an heiress, is undoubtedly very flattering and pleasant,” observed Anne flippantly ; “but it was very nearly being the reverse with me, as I was long, you know, my father's reputed heiress, till you, Fanny and Theresa, most calamitously made your unexpected appearance. I never can understand that story clearly, though Papa explains it to me every morning if I ask him. He never did excel in explanations, and he never will !”

“Especially,” thought Fanny, “when he does

not wish to be distinctly understood, I know no one equal to Mr. Brownlow for casting a thick fog around his *éclaircissements*, for throwing ‘a glamour’ over every listener. How nobly Sir Richard has acted towards him in hushing up that whole affair, and how little he appreciates his marvellous generosity! It is lucky that in this world there arises an intrinsic pleasure from doing right, for if the only motive were to excite gratitude or applause, how seldom that squib would go off! Sir Richard is inestimably happy with my deservedly beloved benefactress, and too happy in his own noble nature to throw away a thought upon that mean grovelling brother, or upon that floating mass of satin and velvet, Mrs. Brownlow. I do most wickedly grudge them all their full-blown happiness about Anne’s marriage; but my cousin herself is a good-natured simpleton, and who can pity Lord Tipperary, if he is forced to be really in sober earnest all that he has so often pretended?”

Lord Brentford had found a sheltered nook in the beautiful rosary at Sydenham, to which, very early that day he skilfully beguiled Theresa, and there he once more declared, in language rendered eloquent by the intensity of his own feelings, how entire and unchangeable had been his attachment ever since their first meeting in Ireland. “Even in that most unromantic of all places—the Tipperary omnibus—I was fascinated by the first sound of

your voice and felt that you must be all in all to me ever afterwards," continued Lord Brentford, recovering his usual tone of animated nonsense as soon as he saw Theresa willing to listen; "I could fall in love with a mere echo; if its tones were as musical as yours. In our former Irish days it sounded as merry as a marriage bell; your eyes 'now brightly bold, now beautifully shy,' but never since we met here have you been the same Theresa! There is a plaintive music in your voice of late that fascinates, but grieves me. To-day every word sounds like a tear! Tell me then what causes this mournful change?"

Theresa wept in silence, and these were the hottest tears she had ever shed, for they were caused by a resolution she had taken to tell Lord Brentford the whole history of her life, including that strange deception into which she had been forced and persuaded; but for which she did not the less blame herself as having been most criminally weak, as well as guilty.

"My poor lost guardian had been formerly so kind to me,—I was accustomed to obey him,—he half persuaded me at the time to believe, as afterwards turned out to be true, that I only personated a character to which I really was born," said Theresa, in concluding the entire confession, her cheek glowing with a scarlet flush, and her eyes glittering with unshed tears. She looked like a

naughty beautiful child forcing itself unwillingly to acknowledge a fault, and Lord Brentford, in smiling delighted admiration, could not bear to break the charm by uttering a word. It had more than the interest of a tragedy for him to see Theresa, usually so merry, wilful, and good-humouredly pert, now subdued by grief, humbled by shame, and not even trying to defend her actions, but heaping one self-accusation on another, with a bitterness against her own conduct that made Lord Brentford only the more keen to palliate what could not be entirely justified.

“Surely it was at least an amiable weakness to yield rather than your unfortunate guardian should rush unbidden into eternity, as he seems to have been always latterly on the point of doing, and did at last,” said Lord Brentford in a soothing tone. “Had he been driven by your refusal then, to commit that fearful act which he perpetrated on himself at last, a harrowing belief would have haunted you for ever that the death of one, who had long been apparently kind, was hastened by that which you could have prevented. Moreover, you had his own authority for believing that you only assumed your own place.”

“Still, still the bare fact stands out before me in hideous remembrance that I consented to become a deliberate deceiver,” answered Theresa, bursting into tears. “I hate myself for it,

and everybody ought to hate me too! You ought!"—

"Of course I do!" replied Lord Brentford smiling. "You know hatred is akin to love, and with me there seems now a very near relationship between them. I hate you almost as much as Abelard hated Eloise; as much as Frederick Clifford hates your sister Fanny. There, now! I have been as candid and disagreeable as the case requires; therefore let us dismiss the troublesome subject from our thoughts now and for ever."

"I wish I could," answered Theresa, large tears still forcing themselves through the long fringes of her closed eyes, and rolling slowly down her burning cheek. "You may kindly forget my fault, but it would not be right for me, 'absolved from guilt but never self forgiven:' it must humble me in my own esteem for the rest of my life."

"I am glad of that, for it will make you perhaps think more favourably in comparison of me. Had you been a piece of faultless perfection, I dare not have ventured to hope; but my ten thousand faults will now be entirely counterbalanced by your one. An Admirable Crichton would scarcely be good enough for you; but let me have some faint hope now that you will put up with me, such as I am—

'The only pang my bosom dare not brave
Must be to find forgetfulness in thine.'

Theresa, did not certainly look a negative, and Lord Brentford felt as he appeared, happier than happy, while he added in accents of joyous felicity, "This is a reality of delight such as ordinary mortals only dream of! Our sky is all blue now, the stream all sunshine, and the breeze filling our sails for a prosperous voyage through life,—

‘ Yes,—let the eagle change his plume,
The leaf its huc, the flower its bloom;
But ties around this heart are spun,
That cannot—shall not—be undone.’ ”

Theresa's face was now beaming with smiles, and glowed with answering emotions of pleasure, when Lord Brentford exclaimed in a tone of animated enthusiasm,

“ Now I feel so buoyant with felicity, that I shall certainly ascend like an impromptu balloon! I sometimes wish one could retire to some beautiful island surrounded by barriers, inaccessible to all bores, to be inhabited only by a selection of the most agreeable people of our acquaintance, all admitted by ballot.”

“ You and I as the original members to have a veto upon every one we whimsically choose to exclude!” continued Theresa, smiling. “ It would be very pleasant never to see any but pleasant people! How many do you propose that the colony shall consist of?”

“ There shall not be less than twenty families; each consisting of a dowager mother in a turban,

a jolly old father of the ‘good old country gentleman’ cut; sons in every profession, and several pretty daughters, all well-informed, accomplished, and fond of rational intercourse. They must be people not given to taking trifles amiss; never fancying affronts when affronts were not intended; returning every person’s civilities themselves; and feeling responsible that no one shall be unhappy even for ten minutes, if they can prevent it.”

“That should all be done upon Christian principle; therefore, suppose you invite Mr. Mortimer to officiate as the clergyman. He would point us out the road of duty in trifles as much as in essentials, and ‘Mould to grace ethereal Virtue’s mind!’”

“Yes! I hope soon to claim the good offices of that truly admirable Mr. Mortimer, on the happiest day of our lives; and he shall certainly be afterwards elected Bishop of my Utopia. We must have a library there, with new books coming out damp from the press every day; and a silk-mercier’s, where the shopkeeper shall smilingly give all his most beautiful articles for whatever mite you choose to offer, and at much less than half-price! Now be a good girl, and tell me that all my hopes of your bestowing yourself on me, unworthy as I am, shall be realized as soon as I return from the Crimea. Much as I have long loved you, Theresa,

it seems as if I had never fully known the depth of my own feelings till now, when, in the very first joy of being accepted, I must so unfortunately, so very unwillingly, leave you—who knows for how long—who knows whether it be for ever.”

Theresa dashed a desperate tear from her eyes, and tried to look composed, but it would not do; for already agitated almost beyond all power of self-command, she now wept without control, while he added in a tone of cheerful animation, “Yet I do not grudge to my country the sacrifice of going. It is right that those in the aristocracy who have most to defend should take the lead, as they have all most chivalrously done, before others who have fewer possessions and less to care for.”

“Yes!” answered Theresa, sorrowfully. “And most gloriously has that example already been given. Who does not weep almost daily over the details of what has been suffered and done by heroes distinguished in rank and wealth, whose noble blood has watered the plains of Alma, of Balaklava, of Inkermann, and the apparently impregnable walls of Sebastopol—a name to be for ever remembered in the most glorious and yet in the blackest annals of our history. War, pestilence, and famine are all trying the indomitable courage of our noble army. And Echo there, whatever is asked her, answers ‘Death!’”

“True!” replied Lord Brentford reflectively.

“ Sebastopol, a name never heard of in Britain a year since, now reeks with the blood of the brave, and is written in characters of fire on the memory and on the heart of every Englishman.”

“ What noble, pious, and gallant spirits, under a fire-shower of ruin beside these battlements, have, in the very excitement of glorious deeds, departed instantaneously from earth to heaven! Those invincible champions of freedom left their bodies strewed on the battle field, willingly sacrificed in the righteous cause of their country and their God. Red, red is the path to glory! How many prayerful Christian soldiers have fought, and bled, and died there, with chivalrous gallantry, charging to the very cannon’s mouth with a lavish bravery, scarcely to be matched in all history,—

‘ Their swords are a thousand, their bosoms are one !
They are true to the last of their blood and their breath,
And like reapers descend to the harvest of death.’

Certain destruction awaited our soldiers often when they unshrinkingly advanced ; not with the reckless rashness of mere Pagans, but with the deep-toned resolution of Christian warriors, fighting for God as well as for their country :—

‘ Let not a tear upon their graves be shed,
The common tribute to the common dead ;
But let the good, the pious, and the brave,
With noble envy sigh for such a grave.’ ”

“ To such men,” said Lord Brentford, in a tone

of earnest seriousness, "their only watchword even at the gate of death is 'Duty.' Well, indeed, and gloriously was every duty performed in every rank on the battle fields before Sebastopol."

"Yes," added Theresa warmly, "and those who were the keenest in exposing their own lives to destruction, were also the first in benevolent humanity to a wounded adversary. Lives, dear and precious to many at home, were lost in attempting to succour a fallen foe. Was there not a recording angel there, however, to testify in heaven above, that amidst blood and slaughter, danger and death, the precepts of a beneficent Saviour were not forgotten? Yes! Many a good Samaritan was found at Alma and Inkermann; men even better than the good Samaritan,—for they risked their lives and lost them too, in succouring not merely a stranger wounded, but a malignant foe. It was done to, not by the roadside in an hour of safety and peace, but in a night of the fiercest conflict. Then excitement and retaliation would have driven on any except a Christian warrior to destroy his enemy; but those were good soldiers of Jesus Christ. They fought a good fight; and if on the battle field they finished their course, yet they kept the faith. May it not, therefore, be firmly believed, that these bold, brave, and humane spirits, shall be welcomed at the last with that blessed sentence, 'Well done, good and faithful servant?'"

Theresa's eyes kindled into splendour as she spoke, her colour brightened to the richest carnation, and her lip quivered with irrepressible emotion, when she added in a low subdued voice of intense feeling—

“The most sublime sight on this earth must be that of a Christian army such as ours, united in a modern crusade, to encounter all that man can dare and suffer in the cause of religion and patriotism.”

“Yes,” added Mr. Mortimer, in a tone of deep enthusiasm, “men like Cathcart, Strangways, Goldie, Seymour, and Torrens,—fearless of death, indifferent to suffering, divested of selfishness, and actuated by every nobler motive—such Christian soldiers excel even the Homeric heroes. Inspired with the love of country, with the desire of an honourable fame, with the ambition to serve their Queen, to rescue mankind from despotism, and to signalize the cause of God among nations, our troops go resolved to conquer or die. Like the Spartan who took his shield, to return with it or on it, they march, whether for life or death, expecting what I trust they shall receive without stint or measure—the gratitude of their country,—and may we not also hope, the approbation of their God!”

“I sometimes imagine what it would be to witness a passing vision in long array of all those

heroes who have bravely fallen since last year!" said Theresa thoughtfully. "One by one, young and old, each leaving, never to return, every precious tie of home and kindred, to preserve our homes in peace. The last words of that accomplished officer Colonel Murray Cowell, are applicable to all, 'I die a soldier's death!' Yes; on the military column hereafter to commemorate our British heroes, his name will appear with that of hundreds more. Carpenter, Dalton, Allix, Williams, Richards, Champion, Cartwright, who each showed their slaughtered regiments how to conquer and to die. Lord Chewton too, waving his bear-skin cap in the air, till mortally wounded, and still calling out, 'Come on my lads, we'll beat them yet, and gain the battle!'"

"It was a fine saying of Napoleon's, who says things better than any one else, 'Marshal St. Arnaud compelled death to wait till he had conquered!'" added Lord Brentford. "How very soon our own noble-minded chief, Lord Raglan, followed his brave colleague; and Colonel Estcourt, whose name was so familiar to us all in signing the despatches, no longer is numbered among living men. They perished in an endeavour to merit the applause and thanks of their countrymen, and we who survive to witness their success, can only repay our debt of gratitude with tears of admiration and regret."

“ I am always impatient to know that every hero who returns invalided home, is duly medalled, knighted, and public-dinnered in his native city,” continued Theresa with animation. “ We ladies, who have nothing else to give, should be liberal of our gratitude, and the more flags, illuminations, bell-ringing, cannonading, and bonfires, the better I am pleased ; though, perhaps, as Sir Charles Coldstream says in ‘Used Up,’ ‘There is really nothing in it!’”

“ Few things burn me up with such a fire of indignation as to hear any one who has remained comfortably at home disparaging our heroes of the campaign !” exclaimed Lord Brentford, warmly. “ If laurels are to be reaped in the Crimea, I shall pick up a sprig for myself, wonderful being that I am !—and woe to the writer of pamphlets lounging in his easy chair at home who shall attempt to pluck it from me when I return triumphant home !—

‘ More stiff my boots, more black my stock,
My hat shall wear a prouder cock ! ’ ”

“ Whenever I now see one of our noble-looking soldiers near the barracks, ‘pride in his port, defiance in his eye!’ it overwhelms me to think how many thousands, bold and brave as he, are now laid in a Crimean grave ! How soon he too may follow, and thousands more !” said Mr. Mor-

timer, feelingly. "Some have been preserved from the tomb by Miss Nightingale and her brigade of nurses; and numbers more had the pillow of death smoothed by their sympathy. The younger soldiers, when dying, almost invariably speak of their own mothers, and often, seeing a female form at prayer by their side, or ministering to their wants, the expiring sufferer has closed his eyes in the belief that she had actually come!"

"I hope all who survive to receive medals will constantly wear that dearly-bought decoration, and not lay them up in lavender only to be seen on state occasions! When yours is brought from the Crimea it shall not be ashamed to show itself," said Theresa, with a timid and tearful smile that made her look like the first cousin to Hebe. "It is sad—oh, how sad!—to part; but your mission is a glorious one, therefore I dare not wish you to remain."

"Yes! Duty first, and pleasure afterwards. *Partant pour la Syrie* now; but my promised bride—dear as any bride ever was to man—shall never be absent from my thoughts—from my prayers—from my very dreams! When Clifford and I return at last, after planting our colours on the highest tower of Sebastopol, what a reception you must bestow upon 'the soldier tired with war's alarms!' All my long yarns patiently listened to, all my deeds admired, all my

hardships pitied, all my looks watched, my every word observed, and we shall enjoy an endless fireside-talk for hours and days together, in our own happiest of homes,—

‘Then say—without our hopes, without our fears,
Without the home that plighted love endears,
Without the smile from partial beauty won,
Oh ! what were man ?—a world without a sun.’”

Tears of pleasurable emotion glittered in Theresa’s eyes, as Lord Brentford jestingly added, “Look there at Clifford and Fanny pretending to be as happy as ourselves ; but can that be possible ? Tipperary and his filigree bride look like a pair of lunatics in love, but enjoy their own butterfly felicity in their own frivolous way.”

“Anne had a most becoming little fit of hysterics with joy on hearing that Lord Tipperary’s regiment is only going to have a campaign at Aldershott,” said Theresa, laughing through her tears. “The greatest contrast to us all, in our light-hearted felicity, is to see Uncle Richard there, feeling so deeply and conversing so gravely with his really too-good-for-this-world Emily. These two will show us all a delightful example how to build up the fabric of our happiness in this fleeting world, so as to last throughout eternity.”

“May every sanguine hope of every happy couple be soon and certainly fulfilled !” said Lord

Brentford, fervently. "But so many of us plunging into engagements at once, reminds me irresistibly of a scene in 'The Critic,' where Leicester says—

'We are all resolved !'

'All ?'

'All !'

'*Dangle.—Nem. con.!* When people are agreed, their unanimity is wonderful !'"

CHAPTER XV.

“ Like the leaves of the forest, when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen ;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strewn.”

BYRON.

WHEN Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford, accompanied by Mr. Mortimer, who had volunteered as a chaplain to the hospital, after a rapid voyage in the *Caradoc*, entered Balaklava harbour, they were filled with admiration for the grand precipitous nearly inaccessible shore, and with animated interest on first beholding the magnificent fleet there, manned with British heroes, each and all so nobly supporting the honour of England's flag, as British sailors always do. The brave tars, in a state of uproarious merriment, had adorned their tents on shore with various inscriptions, “ Revenge for the Tiger,” “ The Trafalgar's Lambs,” “ Sinope,” “ Vengeance,” &c.

Heedless of the cannon thundering at a distance, there were keen preparations and lively rehearsals in progress among the Naval Brigade for acting some farces that evening, at which the presence of several distinguished officers had been promised ; and “ Deaf as a Post ” was to be performed by a

dramatis personæ of gay young midshipmen who never were deaf to the call of duty when summoned into action.

“There goes a lively ball!” exclaimed a laughing sailor, pointing to one which flashed and leaped close beside him, and which he seemed no more to mind than if it had been a billiard-ball rolling along the table. “I like best to hear the rippling and twittering of small arms, but what a waste of good powder those rascally Russians are making!”

“No man sees the shot that kills him; but this world is really not a very safe place to live in!” added another; “I wish we were at the enemy, rather than digging here up to the ankles in mud. It is not, however, so bad as if we were up to the chin! Many are; for the only secure plan is when a shell advances, to lay flat down in the ditch.”

Amidst the tall bluff precipices, higher than any on the English coast, and the snow-clad mountains which hemmed in the allied encampment, the two young officers advanced with rising enthusiasm, animated as if they had been on an expedition in the Highlands for deer-stalking or grouse-shooting, and becoming enthusiastic as they thought of joining so immediately the noblest army ever sent from England’s shores.

Much they had sympathised—as who in Britain has not?—with all that the troops had suffered in their former “rag and famish state.” “But,”

observed Mr. Mortimer, "it is a noble peculiarity in Young England, that the more he hears of hardship and danger the more eager he feels to share the worst. The more desperate the warlike struggle becomes, the keener are juvenile recruits to volunteer for the contest, even if the privations be such that the bare recital might 'draw tears from bearded men.' I cannot read the details myself, they are so harrowing."

"Nor I," observed Lord Brentford; "but, as Anne Brownlow obligingly remarked in reference to my volunteering for active service, 'the Crimea would turn a muff into a hero!'"

"Of course it does," replied Captain Clifford; "if there be an only son in any family of distinction more luxuriously brought up than any eastern prince, he is the first to take a Crimean mania, to show what the soldiers call 'dash,' and tearing himself from his astonished parents to perform prodigies of valour. The son of Lord —— said when he started, that his great ambition was, not to return home till he had at least lost an arm."

"Look at my old friend Soyer advancing in his magnificent costume of blue and silver! How I honour him for his benevolent mission!" exclaimed Captain Clifford; "he has taught our soldiers to make raw coffee equal to Twining's delicious mixture, to disguise pork till it equals venison, to make pancakes of Russia leather, and

to dress fricassees in Russian bear's grease. I must tell Soyer that his word of command as *chef de nos batteries de cuisine* should be, as in old times, 'Front rank—two steps forward, and swallow!' There, too, is the celebrated Russell," added Lord Brentford, "*chef de nos batteries des plumes!*"

After scrambling and floundering onwards for some miles on foot, Lord Brentford and his two companions paused to glance around with unflinching eye on the scenes in which they had come to take an active part, and all on every side was a perfect chaos.

"Well!" exclaimed Captain Clifford, "as Anne Brownlow would say, 'this is not nice!' The very ground on which we stand is scattered over with spent balls and exploded shells like shingle on a sea-shore; that village of wooden huts is planted up to its knees in water, and those officers in the trenches are wading about like mud-larkers at Greenwich! I already recognise my handsome cousin George Byng, who used to be as fine a gentleman as ever wore her Majesty's uniform,—the very flower of England's chivalry,—now maimed and worn down almost to the grave. The sight of his haggard face to-day, as it looks now, will leave a furrow on my memory for ever!"

"There are some of the privates in your own regiment saluting," added Lord Brentford; "I remember them five months ago the admiration of

every nursery-maid in Hyde Park ! They look now quite *à la Balaklava* ! As razors, combs, and brushes, are impossibilities here, they wear matted beards, tangled hair, and jackets that Monmouth Street would be ashamed of !”

“ Yet,” said Captain Clifford, proudly, “ even when these fine fellows were frost-bitten, and more than half-starved last winter, with the snow frozen white in their beards, their clothes stiffened, their noses and fingers turned into thermometers below zero, and the very marrow frozen in their bones, not one word of complaint issued from one man, either officer or soldier, any more than if they had been on parade at Chobham. All evinced stern and silent resolution while awaiting with immovable fortitude the moment when they might renew the siege, when they might attack the Redan, when they should make a present to their Queen and country of Sebastopol ; and when they should, as was said to the Irish brigade, ‘ Do something to make every cabin in Ireland ring ! ’ ”

Lord Brentford and his two friends having discovered that their baggage could not be rescued from the confusion at Balaklava under a week, sat down on some empty packing-boxes, and forgot their personal discomfort in talking of those they had left behind. It seemed to them strange that the same sun which lighted up the peaceful home they had left, shone with equal gladness and brilliancy

on the tombs of the five generals at Cathcart's Hill, and lighted up "the Valley of the Shadow of Death," with the most gorgeous of rainbows, "a bridge of glory reaching to the skies!"

No martial music sounded in the camp. Many of the bands which, but a few months before, had played triumphantly the favourite airs of their regiments when marching to embark, were now almost depopulated—that of the 4th Foot, a short time previously the pride of men and officers, had become entirely extinct; but Mr. Mortimer was deeply touched by finding in how many tents there were nightly prayer-meetings held among men ready to die the next hour if duty called them forth. It was indeed the Church in the Army; and he was welcomed at once by many with cordial respect.

"There shone in the eye of every officer they met that indomitable spirit and courageous bearing allied to noble birth, to enlightened education, and to that high cultivation which raises the power of mind over matter.

"In the East," said Mr. Mortimer, "the native priests believe that the soul belongs to a good spirit, and the body to an evil one; and therefore, like the Papists, they consider that the body is an enemy to be subdued by every sort of ill-usage. That duty seems most thoroughly done here; our officers taking the lead in privations, not with the morose

endurance of monks or stoics, but with the chivalrous devotion of Christian soldiers."

"The privates all bravely and patiently follow the example of such officers as they really respect; but he must be a thorough gentleman in mind and manners," observed Captain Clifford. "In all ranks the feeling of our army by birth, habit, and education, is essentially aristocratic. It is remarkable, that not only the officers, but the men, will instinctively combine to *chassé* from the command any ill-mannered vulgar snob. Some heroes rising from the ranks have deserved their place, and kept it well; but any pert forward upstart soon finds his position too hot to hold him, and it is very frequently the privates who make it so. They will not so much as look at him, and few can stand that."

"Having observed life for a hundred years, and hoping to do so for a hundred years more," said Lord Brentford; "one of my most important remarks is, that in families of distinction, if any one of the members contract a low marriage, like that of my cousin, Lord Ramsgate, the servants'-hall feels quite as much affronted as the drawing-room, and every small tenant on Ramsgate's whole estate felt his degrading connexion an indignity."

"Yes; John Bull likes to arrange society like his pot of porter, Brentford,—the froth, like you, at the top; the dregs at the bottom; and the chief

part in the middle! Here, however, at Balaklava, we see, among the bravest of the brave, that each is best in his proper place and degree, all enduring and working together for our country's good."

"How painters, sculptors, historians, and poets will all exhaust their powers hereafter to represent those scenes which have astonished the world here! There will be abundant subjects for pen and pencil," observed Mr. Mortimer, gazing around. "That accomplished young officer, Lieutenant Walsham, had sent home some beautiful photographs of these very scenes but a few hours before he met his death at the cannon's mouth. I must obtain a picture by Fenton of Sir Colin Campbell, calling out to his brigade, amidst the booming of cannon and the rattling of small shot, 'Let us have none but Highland bonnets here!'"

"And another," said Captain Clifford; "of the glorious 93d, led on in single file by their Colonel, to meet a charge of cavalry, and advancing as coolly as if it had been a review. Anne Brownlow, in her enthusiasm, said she hoped every one of them would be knighted! As Sir Colin declared, 'the Highlanders never retreat;' and that thin red line of Scottish mountaineers, in their tartan array, should be remembered as long as there is a heart in Britain to be grateful."

"Lord George Paget, too, leading on his regi-

ment, and saying, 'Now, my lads! for Old England. Fight, conquer, or die!'"

"Yes, on that day mounting these hills at Balaklava, many a brave unflinching soldier looked at the glorious sun, knowing that this was the last time he should ever behold its light!—that he must be far from every earthly scene before it set," observed Mr. Mortimer solemnly. "In both the allied armies there has been a noble emulation of chivalric martyrdom, and the spectacle has done us all good, by rousing every noble aspiration of our nature in sympathy with those heroes, good as they are brave. In almost every family throughout Great Britain a new impetus has been given to the daily prayers around their fireside, at home, by a fervent desire to commend our noble defenders to the special care of Divine Providence. Every soldier carrying a Bible in his knapsack, and its doctrines inscribed on his heart, becomes no longer a mere martial machine, wound up for mechanical duty, but he carries an infallible talisman against any real evil. In almost every Russian knapsack a pack of cards was found!"

"Poor Captain Vicars, the night before he fell, read prayers to his company, and the lessons," observed Captain Clifford, thoughtfully. "When the Russians advanced, he made his men lie down till the enemy came close. He then shouted, 'Now, 97th, on your pins and charge!' With his own

hands he killed two Russians, and then died a Christian warrior's death on the field of victory."

"Some of the incidents known to have marked this campaign read more like the rather unauthentic adventures of Baron Munchausen, than the events of every-day life. In our camp I really would back truth against fiction," observed Captain Clifford. "Sir George Browne's beautiful white horse, which Wouvermans might have delighted to paint, received eleven bullet wounds before he fell, and the General sprung to his feet unhurt, exclaiming, 'Forward, 23d!' A shell entered the breast of the horse ridden by a nephew of Lord Raglan, and blew the animal to atoms; but his rider fell on the field unhurt; and a cannon ball passed over the head of Colonel M——, so closely as to graze the skin without actually killing him!"

"That was the closest shave I ever heard of!" interrupted Lord Brentford drily. "In respect to the comparison of truth with fiction, Anne Brownlow, with her usual appropriateness, observed, that 'the night ride of Captain Maxse almost excels Dick Turpin's!'"

"If such were the deeds of men who gloriously survived, what shall be said of those who nobly fell — of those whose memory is already consecrated by the tears of their Queen, by the mournful gratitude of their country, and by the approbation, we trust, of their God?" observed Mr. Mortimer, earnestly.

“Think of Newman, Egerton, Yea, Mackinnon,—think of such boy-heroes as Fitzclarence, Anstruther, Grogan, Gordon, and of that gallant young Abercromby, who clasped the colours of his regiment in the very arms of death. His was an end worthy indeed of the brave 93d,—

‘Death strikes the young hero—a glorious mark—
He falls in the blaze of his fame.’ ”

“I have heard,” continued Mr. Mortimer, “that each man in action has a special desire to do honour to the number of his own regiment. A private of the 88th would not for worlds let the 55th excel his corps; and the Inniskillens would not be outdone by the Greys. Many regiments, too, glory in a designation, such as the 58th, known as the ‘Die hards!’ ”

“Yes,” added Captain Clifford, “and the 97th are called ‘The Celestials,’ on account of their blue facings! When a general officer thought he was speaking once to the 3d Foot, he called out, ‘Well done, Old Buffs!’ He had addressed the 68th, who replied, ‘We are not the Old Buffs!’ To which the general goodhumouredly answered, ‘Then, well done, Young Buffs!’ and from that day that name has remained with Sir George Cathcart’s favourite regiment.”

“There has been a strange and melancholy coincidence,” observed Mr. Mortimer, “that so

often lately two brothers serving together have both fallen on the field of glory, leaving their bereaved homes doubly mournful. The Youngs, the Nevilles, the Butlers, the Eddingtons!—rolling years never can fill up the blank around those desolate hearths ! ”

“ Nevertheless,” exclaimed Captain Clifford, with animation,—

‘ One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name ! ’

All Europe now declares that Sebastopol is impregnable ; that we might as easily take the moon itself at the point of the bayonet ; that we have an impossible fortress in front, and are hemmed in by the sea behind ; and that we have another winter of cold endurance to sustain. But no ; we shall yet see what impossibilities French and English valour united can achieve, against an enemy double their own number, all shielded by insurmountable walls ! ”

“ I am in a state of clairvoyance at present,” said Lord Brentford ; “ and already I behold the meteor flag of England, beside the tricolour of France, waving over the highest pinnacle of that inaccessible fortress. Mars himself never fought better than the French ; and every allied soldier would give more than one life, if he had it, for his own country. All testify the same noble spirit as that brave serjeant in the Royal Irish, who said

to his general yesterday, when both legs were broken by a round-shot,—‘Thank God, we did our work, any way. Had I another pair of legs, the country and you would be welcome to them.’ It used to be a proverbial saying, ‘He fought like a Turk;’ but now we should say, ‘He fought as the Allies fought for the Turks.’”

“True,” answered Mr. Mortimer; “that wild hurrah of the Cossacks, when they are advancing like a pack of hounds, is the signal of mere animal courage, driven on, as the saying is, ‘by raki and stick.’ But the calm, silent resolution of British troops, in all the collected dignity of manhood, seeking for glory at the very cannon’s mouth, and dying with a prayer on their lips for Old England, and the dear ones at home, is my conception of the sublime. How solemn were the last words of Major Möller, published in a posthumous letter, written an hour or two before he fell,—‘As we are not to meet here again, remember that we shall meet hereafter!’”

‘They rally, they bleed for our kingdom and crown,
Woe, woe to the riders that trampled them down!’”

CAMPBELL.

“I am proud of our gallant Duke of Cambridge, named by the whole army ‘The Soldier’s Friend,’” said Lord Brentford, with animation. “How nobly he headed his invincible guardsmen at Inkermann, till, their ammunition being ex-

hausted, the few survivors fought with the butt ends of their muskets ! ”

“ Until I became a *vieux moustache* myself,” said Captain Clifford, “ I used to fancy that reading history could give me some idea of a battle,—but no ! Without sharing in the delirium of a regular conflict at the Cape, I never could have combined in imagination the whole bewildering scene !—the roar of musketry, the bellowing of cannon, the very earth shaking, the shouts of victory, the groans of wounded men, the last moan of expiring soldiers, the shriek of the vulture approaching to his prey, and the glorious British cheer of final triumph ! ”

“ The sooner you hear that again, the better,” said Lord Brentford, with animation. “ It is rather diverting, now, at dinner parties in London, to observe how every corpulent half-pay major at home could manœuvre the whole British army a thousand times better than the Commander-in-Chief ! He places a decanter to represent the Redan, lays his saps and parallels in biscuit, brings up a brigade of wine-glasses to the attack, pours down a volley of dessert-spoons to personate cannon, and takes Sebastopol at the point of his silver fork, without losing a man !—

‘ Lord Chatham, with his sword undrawn,
Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan ;
Sir Richard, longing to be at ’em,
Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham ! ’ ”

CHAPTER XVI.

“In the field of proud honour, our swords in our hands,
Our ‘*Queen*’ and our country to save,
While victory shines on life’s last ebbing sands,
Oh, who would not rest with the brave !”

BURNS.

POLITICIANS in London, living now at the rate of a battle a day from the East, soon become dissatisfied even with that supply; and when told of a despatch some hours old, discontentedly say, “I heard of that several hours ago; but is there nothing new?”

Time had rolled on, telling of many brilliant exploits, and bringing news of deep anxiety to those at home, whose all in life depended on the safety of fathers, husbands, or brothers, engaged in mortal strife against the enemies of freedom.

Theresa and Fanny were now settled permanently in Chesham Place, with their uncle Sir Richard, now the happiest of all happy bridegrooms, having at last been united to his long-beloved Emily, with whom he enjoyed all the

romance, as well as all the reality, of most perfect and well-founded felicity.

One fine September evening, every street in Belgravia resounded with the vociferous uproar of newsmen, rushing about in a frantic state, and emulating each other in the noisy incomprehensibleness of their outcry, as they shrieked aloud in a language that might have been Dutch, and seemed anything but English, that some tremendous event had occurred in the East. Where or what that might be, no mortal could discover or guess, without securing a "Globe" or "Standard," both of which those men, using voices like tin trumpets, were so incoherently hawking about.

With what trembling hands did Theresa tear open the damp sheets of one copy she had rushed out to secure; and her eyes grew blind as she endeavoured to scan its contents. Fanny too, pale as death, gazed with gasping intensity over her shoulder, till at length, with a shudder of alarm, they caught sight of the gigantic types in which appeared that marvellous announcement, of which all England an hour before had nearly despaired—

"FALL OF SEBASTOPOL!!!"

The electric telegraph—that rapid, but cruelly unsatisfactory messenger—could give, as usual,

only half information. It announced, however, that many English were killed, names unknown, and many severely wounded. From that day every moment seemed to the sisters an age of harrowing suspense, each trying to reassure the other, but each apprehending the worst, while "the field of the dead ran red on her sight."

At last came Major Curzon, bringing the despatches of General Simpson, detailing how that hero among heroes, Colonel Windham, had headed against the Redan, the forlorn, or rather the impossible hope. Trenches too narrow, ladders too short, a long open sweep for opposing cannon, and the noble regiments next to annihilated, which had devoted themselves to death, bequeathing their honour, dearer than life, to England and to their mourning relatives: every individual in Britain must feel himself personally the guardian of such dear-bought fame! Can a soldier do more than die for his country? and that country will do no less than consecrate the memory of such martyrs, by paying all the honour due to their glorious names—

"Toll for the brave!"

After running the eye safely through the long, long list of killed, Theresa gave a deep sigh of relief, as none were there in whom she felt a peculiar interest; but it was very different when

she reached the yet longer catalogue of wounded. These words seemed to blast her sight—

“The Earl of Brentford, arm amputated; Captain Clifford, dangerously.”

That was a moment of measureless agony! Fanny fell insensible on the floor, and for a moment, at such a sight, Theresa suspended her own anguish, while attempting to restore that very dear sister.

A dark curtain must fall now over these feelings of torturing alarm, of long suspense, of helpless anguish, with which Theresa and Fanny wept together, awaiting the next accounts, yet trembling to anticipate them. Nothing is so difficult to bear as inactive grief! At last, however, came letters from both wounded officers to Theresa and Fanny, promising a rapid recovery and a joyful return, but insisting much that the earliest imaginable day after their arrival should be the happiest of their lives, as nothing would promote their entire restoration so rapidly as the realizing of all their long-cherished hopes, in being indissolubly united to those they so truly, so ardently loved.

Week after week slowly and anxiously elapsed, when at last, in a long list of invalids expected next day at Southampton, appeared the names of Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford. They arrived in London soon after. It was a moment

of anguish and of felicity never to be forgotten, when those so devotedly attached to each other met at last. Then—

‘Pain’s extreme and pleasure’s seem’d to touch.’”

At first those much-loved invalids, when they arrived at Sir Richard’s hospitable mansion, where rooms had been prepared for them, were scarcely able for the slightest effort; but by degrees, under the sunshine of so much felicity, they gradually revived, and nothing contributed so much to this happy result as the certainty that an early day had been fixed, which would give them a claim to the constant society of their affianced brides.

“My own Theresa at last!” said Lord Brentford, after the first tumultuous rapture of their meeting had in some degree subsided, though his voice yet trembled with agitation and weakness, “I promised you my hand, little thinking ever to break that vow; but since it is left in the Crimea, you must take me as I am, a mutilated old fellow, fit only for Chelsea Hospital.”

“Nothing tends to recovery so much as perfect happiness. Every doctor should put that down in his prescription,” observed Captain Clifford, turning to Fanny. “And now we must all prepare for the worst, at St. George’s, Hanover Square, next week. Mine is so great a mind,

it does not take long to make up; and luckily there is very little time left for us to quarrel in, or to change our minds!"

"I am told the clerk at St. George's fainted yesterday with the fatigue of announcing all our marriages," said Lord Brentford, laughingly turning to Lord Tipperary. "Ours is, indeed, a welcome home! I wish that among the wounded Crimeans, there may be many such happy returns!"

"I envy you both for seeing an English regiment march along the streets of Sebastopol as if in Piccadilly, playing the tune of 'God save the Queen!'" replied Lord Tipperary, "and now returning to lay your blood-stained laurels at the feet of those you love. What can life give more?"

"I am so glad," observed Anne, addressing Lord Brentford in a tone of mingled condolence and congratulation, "so very glad, that it was not your leg which had to be amputated. The loss of an arm is always rather graceful than otherwise! I quite admire the empty sleeve, buttoned up, and all that,—but you cannot so well carry off the loss of a leg!"

"No! especially as mine is considered the handsomest in the British army," replied Lord Brentford, laughingly tapping his boot; "and this is, as Brummel said, 'my favourite leg.'"

“I am told,” added Anne, “that the crowd in church to see you Crimean heroes will be perfectly startling. Reserved seats are already bespoke in the reading-desk.”

“How I envy the ladies their Brussels veils!” exclaimed Lord Brentford, turning laughingly towards Theresa, to whom he added in a low voice—“My heart now seems almost aching with felicity! If there be a power in human will and in human love, your whole future existence shall hereafter be shielded from sorrow. It shall become like my own, one long season of measureless content, with not a cloud on our sunshine, nor a wrinkle of care on our foreheads!”

“I have often thought,” said Captain Clifford, “that young ladies are very rash to accept of any offer without having previously inspected the gentleman’s country house, where they are invited to pass the rest of their lives. It might be a place quite impossible ever to feel happy in. Perhaps hideous architecture, or too many trees, or too few.”

“Certainly!” interrupted Anne, with vivacity; “I am generally satisfied, however, with being shown a photograph. Nine gentlemen last season brought me pictures of their places, but not one exactly suited. If a husband turn out dull or stupid, you can thrust him away into any corner; but if the house itself be insufferable, what can one do with that?”

“We know the worst of Torchester Abbey,” observed Lord Brentford, smilingly turning to Theresa; “and I am prepared heroically to rough it there through life, in a home rendered doubly dear, since it comes to me not by descent, but by the happiest of marriages.”

“I admire an ancient place most when the ancient family is in it,—the descendants of those who loved, and mourned, and suffered, and rejoiced there in former ages together,” answered Theresa, looking diffidently on the ground. “Even those old hereditary crows, peeping down from the venerable oaks, will give the representative of the Brentfords a hoarse greeting of welcome when restored to the halls of his ancestors.”

“Here, then, I shall imitate all the virtues of my predecessors, and avoid all their faults, if, unlike myself, they had any,” added Lord Brentford. “I intend to grow not only happier there every day, but wiser and better too!”

On Saturday morning, the twentieth of October, 1855, the sun shone, the bells rang, carriages rushed frantically about Belgravia, adorned with favours, and the crowd in St. George’s, Hanover Square, baffled all description, when the Crimean heroes, wearing, at the special request of Theresa, their medals, led the two most lovely of brides to the altar, followed by Lord Tipperary, scarcely yet recovered from his own astonishment to find

himself in sober earnest marrying Anne Brownlow. She made her appearance drowned in tears, and carried the most magnificent bouquet ever seen in church! Anne was followed by twelve brides'-maids, in the usual blue silk polkas, with white muslin skirts, and during the ceremony there was every reason to fear that she would treat the spectators to a fit of hysterics. Lady Tipperary succeeded at any rate in drawing the chief share of attention on herself, and in looking altogether as ridiculous as it was possible for a rather pretty young bride to be.

On the propitious day, before any one of the guests had arrived in church, one individual appeared there, stealing quietly into a very remote pew, couching noiselessly out of sight, and wearing the deepest mourning. She sat quietly down, and remained throughout the ceremony immovable as a statue, her forehead resting on the open prayer-book which lay before her. Nothing continued visible in that dark recess but a bonnet of black crape, overhung by the deep double veil, intimating that those ties of affection had been but recently severed from her heart, the sacred commencement of which for others she had come, evidently with very solemn emotion, to witness.

No image on any tombstone around remained more immovable during the ceremony than Susan O'Hara, who had been unable to resist the entrea-

ties of Theresa and Fanny, that she would be present to give them her prayers during the impressive service which was to seal their happy prospects for life. It was only towards the conclusion, when she put her handkerchief from time to time stealthily to her eyes, that any spectator could have known that the mourning widow had life at all. After the last solemn words, however, had been spoken by the Bishop, which united Lord Brentford and Captain Clifford to those they so deeply loved, and after all the necessary documents were signed in the vestry, Theresa turned hastily round towards the chancel. With a hurried, impetuous step, followed almost as rapidly by Fanny, she then advanced towards a distant corner, in which the solitary spectator yet lingered, and clasping Susan energetically in her arms, riveted them round her adopted mother in a long, tearful, but perfectly speechless embrace.

Lord Brentford stood for some moments a pleased spectator of the scene; then taking Susan kindly by the hand, he said, in accents of cordial respect, "Mrs. O'Hara, in committing my whole earthly happiness to that dear Theresa, the object of my entire affection, I do so with, if possible, added confidence from the knowledge how long she lived under the sunshine of your bright example. Hereafter, as soon as Clifford or I think we have reason to complain of our wives, we shall bring

them to you for a lesson of every excellence a woman can evince—and,” added Lord Brentford almost sternly, “exercised under every difficulty that the power of man could inflict.”

“As you think so kindly of me, Lord Brentford, let me hope that Theresa and you will think as kindly of my husband,” replied Susan, in low trembling accents. “He loved these girls; he would have died to serve them; he was betrayed, misled, misrepresented; but,—but ——”

Susan paused, hesitated, and burst into tears.

All present were deeply affected, and a solemn respectful silence ensued, broken at last by Lord Brentford, who said in accents of most friendly earnestness,—

“Every feeling of your heart, Mrs. O’Hara, shall be respected by us all. Theresa and I shall remember her guardian hereafter only as you could desire. We shall talk frequently of his early kindness to her, and think with pity of his great misfortunes. Meanwhile, here we are, all four happy mortals, come to unite in one anxious request to a dear and much-valued friend. Mrs. O’Hara, our future homes must become yours, and we shall share your society amongst us. In our treaty of peace to that effect, I shall be as yielding as the Czar ought to be in respect to terms. Make what stipulations you please; but Theresa and Fanny desire ardently that in all the

vicissitudes of life, they may still enjoy your affectionate sympathy. It has been theirs from childhood; let it be theirs as long as we all survive. Clifford and I unite with Theresa and Fanny in most cordially entreating your consent. Then—

‘May the sunshine of love illumine our youth,
And the moonlight of friendship console your decline!’”

MOORE.

THE END.







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